

**Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in Contemporary
Africa: Lessons from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara**

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(September 2019)

DECLARATION (Signed)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Thomas Noel Isadore Sankara himself, one of the most underrated leaders in Africa and the world at large, who undoubtedly stands shoulder to shoulder with ANY leader in the world, and tall amongst all of the highly revered and celebrated revolutionaries in modern history. I also dedicate this to Mariam Sankara, Thomas Sankara's wife, for not giving up on the long and hard fight of ensuring that justice is served for Sankara's death, and that those who were responsible, directly or indirectly, are brought to book. I also would like to tremendously thank and dedicate this thesis to Blandine Sankara and Valintin Sankara for affording me the time to talk to them at Sankara's modest house in Ouagadougou, and for sharing those heart-warming and painful memories of Sankara with me. For that, I say, *Merci boucop*. Lastly, I dedicate this to my late father, ntate Pule Leshoele and my mother, Mme Malimpho Leshoele, for their enduring sacrifices for us, their children.

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ABSTRACT

This study is about four interrelated key issues, namely, critique of Thomas Sankara as a political figure and erstwhile president of Burkina Faso; examination of Pan-Africanism as a movement, theory, ideology and uniting force for Africans and people of African descent globally; evaluation of leadership and governance lessons drawn from Burkina Faso's August 1983 revolution, its successes, challenges, and shortcomings, and lastly; it draws socio-economic and developmental lessons from the Burkina Faso experience under Sankara's administration during the brief period from 1983 until his untimely assassination on 15 October 1987. The ousting of Blaise Compaore in October 2014 brought to the fore Sankara's long buried and suppressed legacy, and this is what, in part, led to me deciding to do a systematic and thorough study of Sankara and the Burkina Faso Revolution. Two theories were used in the study – Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity - because they together centre and privilege the African people's plight and agency and the urgent need for Africans to find solutions to their own problems in the same way Sankara emphasised the need for an independent endogenous development approach in Burkina Faso. Methodologically, a Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach was employed so as to exploit and leverage the strengths of each individual approach and due to the complex nature of the phenomena studied. The study argues that the nerve centre of developmental efforts in Burkina Faso was a self-propelled, self-centred, and endogenous development model which placed the agency and responsibility, first and foremost, in the hands of Burkinabe people themselves using their own internal resources to improve their lives. Secondly, agrarian reforms were designed in such a way that they formed the bedrock of economic self-reliance and industrial development in Burkina Faso. Lastly, overall findings of the study indicate that the revolutionary cause and intervention in all critical sectors such as education, health, and the economy were prioritised and the pace at which these sectors were overhauled was crucial. Implication of these findings for development in Africa is that development cannot be externally imported either through foreign direct investments or through a straight-jacket policy transfer where African countries often borrow European economic policies and try to implement them in drastically different contexts and historical epochs.

Keywords: Thomas Sankara, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, Africa, development, African Renaissance, Leadership, Revolution, Burkina Faso.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

African Renaissance – “all-embracing concept that draws its inspiration from the rich and diverse history and cultures of Africa...[It] provides a framework for modern Africa to re-emerge as a significant partner in the New World order” (Jana, 2001: 38).

Afrocentricity – “a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history” (Asante, 2007: 16-17).

Austerity – A deliberate cutting back of public funds (in certain sectors/projects) so as to better manage public finances.

Casablanca bloc – This refers to a group of countries which wanted the immediate political and economic unification of Africa leading up to the wave of independence in Africa in the 1960s. It was led by, amongst others, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

Communalism – A model and approach to life which emphasises that production and distribution of resources must be done together (in common) and shared likewise in society (Rodney, 1973). Note that this is a different concept from communism.

Delinking – “...the organisation of a system of criteria for the rationality of economic choices based on a law of value, which has a national foundation and a popular content, independent of the criteria of economic rationality that emerges from the domination of the law of capitalist value that operates on a world scale” (Amin, 1987: 436). In short, this is, according to Amin, a necessary “break” from the global capitalist system by the periphery countries of the global south.

Endogenous Development – “the process of economic, social, cultural, scientific and political transformation, based on the mobilisation of internal social forces and resources and using the accumulated knowledge and experiences of the people of a country” (Dembele, 2013).

Franc Zone – This is a collective name of 15 countries (mostly in West Africa) who use two currencies that are pegged with the French currency. These are ‘former’ France colonies.

Ma’at – This is a Kemetic (Egypt) philosophy which says that everything in the world functions optimally if there is balance. It has seven principles: “truth, justice, order, harmony, balance, compassion, and reciprocity” (Nantambu, 1998: 573).

Monrovia bloc – This is a group of countries which, unlike the Casablanca bloc, preferred a much slower, cautious, and gradualist approach to the unification of Africa, beginning with regional economic cooperation. It was led by, amongst others, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria.

Pan-Africanism – a struggle movement, ideology, and theory that seeks to emancipate Africans and people of African descent from all forms of oppression.

Pan-African Nationalism – “nationalistic, unified struggle/resistance of African peoples against all forms of foreign aggression and invasion, in the fight for nationhood/nation building. It does this based on the pillars of Ma’at” (Nantambu, 1998: 569).

Revolution – “a kind of a restoration, whereby the insurgents attempt to restore liberties and privileges which were lost as a result of the government’s temporary lapse into despotism” (Arendt, 1965: 34).

Revolution 2.0 – This refers to the October 2014 revolt against the Blaise Compaore government by mainly the youth, civil society organisations and the broader society which led to the deposing of Compaore from power. The “2.0” simply signifies that it was the second revolution since the August 1983 Sankara revolution.

Sankofa – Philosophy inspired by the Sankofa bird which flies at a high speed with an egg in its mouth while its head is facing backward so as to better navigate where it came from so as to calibrate the direction it must take to its final destination.

Sankarian(s) – “Those who idolise him as an icon of social change, see him as a role model in life and admire his charisma and approve his philosopher-king leadership style are Sankarians or Sankariens” (Botchway and Traore, 2018: 22-23).

Sankarism – “A philosophy grounded by the imperative of self-sufficiency and sustainable development that emanates from within and not from without” (Yimovie, 2018: 192).

Sankarist – “People who believe in the populist, easy-to-relate-to revolutionary political leadership of Sankara, and who work to animate a process of sustainable social change in Burkina Faso [and elsewhere]¹, might call themselves Sankarists” (Botchway and Traore, 2018: 22).

Sankara Oath – This is a written agreement that politicians and other government officials (especially high-ranking ones) undertake to uphold by agreeing to lead simply lives (as Sankara

¹ My emphasis.

did) and to demonstrate this, they are obliged to use public services which they themselves provide to the general population.

Thought Leader(ship) – “Someone who possesses the right kind of knowledge to advance new thinking and inspire others as well as enhances what needs to be achieved [...]. This connotes a leadership orientation that is underpinned by unconventional ideology and approach” (Gumede, 2017: 87).

ABBREVIATIONS and ACRONYMS

AfCFTA – African Continental Free Trade Area

Burkina – Burkina Faso

CDP – Congress for Democracy and Progress

CDRs – Comité de Défense de la Révolution (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution)

CFA – Colonies Françaises d'Afrique (French Community of Africa)

CNR (or NCR) – Conseil National de la Révolution (National Council of the Revolution)

EPAs – Economic Partnership Agreements

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

FESPACO – Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la télévision du Ouagadougou (Pan African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou)

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GMOs – Genetically Modified Organisms

HDI – Human Development Index

ICC – International Criminal Court

IMF – International Monetary Fund

Lipad – Ligue Patriotique pour le Développement (Patriotic League for Development)

MMR – Mixed Methods Research

Ouaga – Ouagadougou

QUAL – Qualitative research (note that the QUAL is capitalised because this signals that this research approach dominates in this MMR study)

Quan – Quantitative research

SAPs – Structural Adjustments Programmes

SIAO – Salon International de l'Artisanat de Ouagadougou (International Arts and Handicrafts Trade Show of Ouagadougou)

TCA – Thematic Content Analysis

TFTA – Tripartite Free Trade Area

TPR – Tribunaux Populaires de la R volution (Popular Tribunals of the Revolution)

UFB – Union des Femmes du Burkina (Women’s Union of Burkina)

UNIA – Universal Negro Improvement Association

WST – World System Theory

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Dear Sir/Madam

**REF: CONFIRMATION OF EDITING: PAN-AFRICANISM AND AFRICAN RENAISSANCE IN
CONTEMPORARY AFRICA: LESSONS FROM BURKINA FASO'S THOMAS SANKARA (BY MOOROSI
LESHOELE)**

This letter serves to confirm that I have professionally performed language and structure editing of the above-mentioned work. I am a member of the Editorial Board of the Faculty of Arts Language Consultancy Unit. This unit has the mandate to do all the editing works for the university and for anyone who requires this service for a fee.

Regards

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The deposing of Blaise Compaore, the former President of Burkina Faso, in 2014 who ruled for over twenty-seven-years (1987-2014), led to the resurgence and closer attention to the legacy of Thomas Sankara. Sankara ruled Burkina Faso for a period of four years (1983-1987) before he was brutally assassinated in October 1987. In these four years, having inherited a country that was and still is amongst the poorest in the world, Sankara set out to pursue significant wide-ranging reforms that were aimed at improving the wellbeing of the citizens of Burkina Faso (known as the Burkinabè). Amongst many socio-economic challenges, Burkina Faso (then the Republic of Upper Volta) was ravaged by rampant corruption, one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, deep levels of poverty, and its natural resources (especially gold) were plundered by its former coloniser, France (Harsch, 2013; Brittain, 1985; Skinner, 1988).

This study seeks to dissect and interrogate Thomas Sankara's leadership, his revolutionary governance, socio-political, economic, cultural, ecological, and ideological philosophy, paying closer attention to the four years that marked Burkina Faso's revolution from 4 August 1983 through to 15 October 1987. Sankara's legacy and his unorthodox leadership styles and governance approaches are used to distil pertinent development lessons that contemporary African leaders across various levels of leadership (mainly in the public sector) can draw from in the efforts to realise the much elusive development agenda, renaissance of the continent and the much-articulated Pan African unity. Sankara's government developmental interventions in the form of projects, programmes, policies adopted are explored and evaluated so as to gain a better and systematic understanding of why and how they succeeded and why some failed. Theoretically and conceptually, two theoretical frames and/or ideologies were used to ground, shape and direct the study. They are Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity theories.

In only about four years, Burkina Faso evolved from being one of the poorest countries in the world to being food sufficient (Harsch, 2014) as they were able to meet their basic food products needs, meaning that they had food sovereignty. A few months after Sankara assumed power, he made a profound speech (known as the political orientation speech) which set the tone for his socio-economic plans for Burkina Faso. "The Burkinabe revolution will provide a method

of combating hunger, thirst and ignorance, but most of all, it will fight against the forces of neo-colonialism and imperialist domination” (Wilkins, 1989: 382). When Sankara assumed power on 4 August 1983, Burkina Faso had the highest infant mortality rate in the world at 280 deaths for every 1000 births, which dropped to 145 deaths per 1000 births in just two years (Ray, 2007).

Murrey (2012) and Ray (2007) found that school attendance in Burkina was estimated at a meagre 12% of school going age children, which almost doubled (22%) in just two years of the new Sankara administration. This administration immunised approximately 2.5 million children (making Burkina Faso the first African country to successfully conduct such a large-scale immunisation campaign). There was one doctor for every 50 000 Burkinabè, in addition, the country had an annual income of about \$150 per person (Ray, 2007). Amongst many developmental efforts introduced, Sankara launched a reforestation programme that had over 10 million trees that were planted in an effort to prevent the Sahara desert from widening, and many infrastructural programs were rolled out, such as the building of a railway lines (by the communities with their bare hands) connecting Ouagadougou, the capital city, with other smaller towns and villages (Ray, 2007; Harsch, 2014).

Background

African unity for inclusive development² of African people in the continent and the diaspora as espoused by Kwame Nkrumah and other nationalist leaders prior and during the independence wave in Africa seems to be gaining more traction as demonstrated by the African Union Vision 2063, the Tri-partite Free Trade Area (TFTA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The fact that Thomas Sankara was able to ‘face’ of Burkina Faso in just four years of his reign and was able (relatively) to achieve certain gains which most African countries have struggled to make in many decades (Dembele, 2013) implies that there are important lessons to be learned by African leaders in order to realise a genuine renaissance of Africa and its people.

Punitive economic sanctions, or what some term illegal sanctions, are some of the soft power instruments that have been used by world hegemonies to ‘discipline’ countries/leaders in the

² For this study, this refers to improved wellbeing of people that caters for all segments and classes of society.

Global South who attempt to charter a truly independent path to development outside the Western prescribed models to development. Mutunhu (2011: 69) also observed that “efforts by Africa to resist the interference of the North often trigger economic sanctions, example, the smart sanctions in Zimbabwe or the elimination of powerful leaders like Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah”. It is against this background that philosophies and lessons from such progressive leaders should be analysed and critiqued with the hope of using them to improve African Renaissance, Pan Africanism and ultimately for the United States of Africa government to be realised, as espoused and prophesied by Kwame Nkrumah and other Pan African nationalists who came before and after him. It is therefore, in this brief backdrop that this study was undertaken, with Burkina Faso’s Thomas Sankara, his governance, and philosophies as the case study, amongst many influential and revered African leaders who came before him.

It should be noted that some scholars write the term “Pan Africanism” with a capital letter “P” as done in this study, while others instead prefer to use a small letter “p”. George Shepperson (1960a: 346) attempts to give some clarity on the difference by arguing that,

"Pan-Africanism" with a capital letter is a clearly recognizable movement: the five Pan-African Congresses (1919, Paris; 1921, London; 1923, London and Lisbon; 1927, New York; 1945, Manchester), in all of which the American Negro scholar, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois , played a major part; it is linked with the publication of George Padmore's Pan-Africanism or Communism? (London, 1956) and with the first All-Africa People's Conference at Accra in December 1958.

Shepperson (1960a) further makes a case that pan Africanism with a small letter “p” refers to any other movements that are/were not associated with Du Bois’ strand of Pan Africanism and thus are not “clearly recognisable” as their nucleus or umbilical cord has no direct links with the five congresses where Du Bois played a leading role in organising. Shepperson (1960a: 346) further adds that, “it is rather a group of movements, many very ephemeral. The cultural element often predominates. The complicated history of negritude is a good example of this.” This study uses the Pan Africanism with a big “P” not necessarily in line with the arguments and prescripts of George Shepperson per se, but because a holistic view of this ideology is adopted by the study.

The study considers different Pan Africanisms as having, ideally, the same underlying ideal, and that is the achievement of self-determination of Africans (read the black race) wherever

they are in the world, and their ability to call their souls their own, to paraphrase Robert Sobukwe. For instance, many of this movement's forebears and proponents like Edward Blyden, Martin Delany and Bishop Henry Turner (in the 19th century), to mention a few, did not explicitly refer to this movement and ideology as Pan Africanism.

Problem Statement

Many prominent and revered African leaders in Africa and throughout the diaspora are either dead or their characters assassinated (Dukuzumurenyi, 2010) in effort to stifle the continent from self-determination and genuine independence in all sectors and spheres of society. It is important to note that I refer to Africans, not in a myopic continental sense only, but also inclusive of those in other parts of the world (the diaspora) due to historical realities such as slavery or other socio-politico and economic realities. This is because of the theoretical frameworks that the study adopted and infused. Those are, Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity theories, which emphasise the need for African peoples' agency and self-determination world over, especially that of black people in particular (see Chapter Four).

Greatly respected Pan African leaders such as Thomas Sankara, Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Steve Biko, Amilcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and others were assassinated, as alluded earlier. There are, however, few leaders of their generation who were not outright assassinated (such as Robert Mugabe, Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela), some may have died because of natural causes like old age and some, like Mbeki are still alive. Chinweizu (1987) in his book titled, *Decolonising of the African Mind*, gives an elaborate clarity on this notion (of how some of our leaders are terminated, physically or in character, while some are glorified by the global powers that be because they dance (at least for now) to their tune). Unfortunately for most of them, all that is left is the rhetoric and "heroism" around their names, but their ideals and wisdom are hardly reflected upon, and most importantly, their ideals are not attempted in practice.

The dilemma that this presents is that, while Africans throughout the world remain at the bottom of the socio-economic power relations ladder and hierarchy, African people are responsible for such glorious achievements in history like the building of pyramids in Egypt

and elsewhere and civilising the world, long before Europe was civilised. Put differently, the problem that the study sought to research is the notion that accountable governance and development continues to be a challenge in Africa even when we have had noble leaders such as the ones mentioned here. Thomas Sankara is one such leader. This study therefore contends that Africa must systematically and with sincerity learn from its most progressive and dedicated leaders, alive or dead, so that it does not repeat the same mistakes that its forebears committed. This study therefore explores Sankara's legacy and philosophy and lessons are drawn from it in the hope that that Pan Africanism and African rebirth can be genuinely realised and implemented.

Marcus Garvey once said that a "people without history are like a tree without roots" (Jacques-Garvey, 2009). The irony here however, is that Africans, as indicated, have a wealth of victorious history as outlined by (Gumede, 2015) and others. However, Africa's developmental paralysis is akin to a tree without roots. And therein lies the real problem and complexity of poor developmental progress in Africa. It might be that a deeper and relevant question and problem is whether Africans truly know their authentic history and wittingly or unwittingly choose to ignore it, or they don't know it because it was distorted and not taught throughout generations? It is unfortunately a paradoxical phenomenon that Africa, being the undisputed cradle of human kind and with such a rich and glorious history, is the poorest continent, yet it is abundantly endowed with the most resources, human and natural alike. Africa has the most arable land to feed itself and the rest of the world and it also has enough sunshine throughout the year to generate enough energy/power which can ignite industrialisation at a massive scale.

It was important that this study explored in detail this problem, what is often termed, the "African leadership and development curse" which seems to be a twin problem with the widely acknowledged resource curse that plagues the entire African continent. African resources are yet to fully and meaningfully benefit its citizenry. The relevance, significance, and depth of this problem is that, if Sankara could change the face of Burkina Faso in just the four years that he was President, then what really prevents other African leaders from doing the same, especially those who reigned after him, especially considering that many African heads of state/government have been in power for many decades, which Sankara did not have?

Research Questions

The primary research question, which helped answer the research problem was:

- What leadership traits and governance strategies could Africans learn from Thomas Sankara's revolutionary government to advance African unity and renaissance?

Sub-questions are:

- A. What influenced Burkinabe people to embrace Thomas Sankara's governance approach?
- B. Were Thomas Sankara's socio-economic development programmes democratically enforced or dictatorially implemented?
- C. How can legacies of great African leaders like Thomas Sankara be used to inform and guide contemporary leaders for African renaissance to be achieved?

Research Objectives

1. To explore governance philosophies of Thomas Sankara and his Pan African ideals.
2. To put into perspective Burkina Faso's popular revolution of 1983.
3. To assess Thomas Sankara's leadership qualities and organisational capabilities.
4. To distil lessons for socio-economic development from the Thomas Sankara administration of 1983-1987.

Scope of the Study

The study site was Ouagadougou, the capital city of Burkina Faso. Most infrastructural projects that were rolled out by Sankara's government are in this city and union movements and other 'institutional kingmakers' are also in this city, hence its choice as the case study. Furthermore, many bureaucrats and Sankara's former colleagues, comrades and acquaintances are still based in this city, so it helped with data collection in fieldwork. The study employed a mixed methods research approach; therefore, the sample size was kept relatively modest. A number of the interviewees were people who knew Sankara personally (such as family members) and those who worked with him or met him on many occasions in his short lifetime, especially during his Presidency. Others were people who knew Sankara in the conduct of their duties, such as journalists and diplomats, or individuals he met as he was doing his Pan African work across

the world. Other data sources were his speeches and a select few of relevant literature that was codified and quantified (see Chapter Four). In addition to human sources of information (respondents) on Sankara, books, journals and online resources such as documentaries were used to gather more information on his governance and ideals.

There are sizeable crucial lessons learned from the Burkina Faso experience in that crucial period of Sankara's Presidency which spanned only four years or one term. (It is important to note that this is the key period studied, that is, the period of 1983-1987). Amongst them are how infrastructural programmes such as building of dams, railway tracks, schools and clinics were achieved or attempted when foreign aid and foreign direct investments (FDI) were virtually non-existent in Burkina Faso (Martin, 1987). The socio-economic lessons from this experience were important focus of the study because the neo-liberal dogma that has for decades been propagated by the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation) been suggesting that the developing world needs aid and external financial assistance and 'expertise' to successfully develop.

However, overwhelming indications point to the contrary, that is, Structural Adjustments Programmes (SAPs) and other austerity measures may have worsened the living conditions of ordinary citizens in many countries in Africa and the rest of the Global South (Tandon, 2015). Sankara was indeed cognisant of the point that the hand that feeds you wields its will upon you, hence he at all times reiterated the urgent need for the Burkinabè to be self-sufficient. Lessons around Popular Development Programme, endogenous development, planned economy, industrial development (with agriculture as the pillar) were analysed. The subsequent 27 years of Blaise Compaore's rule of Burkina Faso after the assassination of Thomas Sankara were not put under the microscope of this study, they were merely alluded to and used in passing to make certain points and arguments such as to show how the 'rectification' of the revolution by Compaore was in fact the reversal of major gains of the revolution under his predecessor. The study should not be expected to analyse and cover previous administrations that governed Burkina Faso since independence in the 1960s until 1982. However, historiography synopsis of Burkina in this period is mooted to only where it relates to the core objectives, research problem, and research questions of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The most critical limitation of the study was the glaring language barrier because Burkina Faso is a Francophone country, meaning that most people are more conversant in French than English or any other major internationally recognised language. So, the fact that I cannot comprehend French had a potential of adversely affecting the rigour of the study. Some of the nuances could have been lost when the key informants were responding to research questions, because I also had to source a translator and interpreter since most of interviewees could not communicate in English, or were not fluent enough. Even in cases where some interviewees had an appreciation of English, their poor proficiency in the language would have resulted in them either distorting some crucial inputs and contributions they would have better articulated if they were to speak in French or their mother tongue. For a few of the respondents who insisted on responding in English, I explicitly told them that they could switch between their two most proficient languages as and when they wanted.

Another limitation that may have affected the reliability of the study is researcher bias because of my rather obvious admiration of Sankara and his achievements in Burkina Faso. It is therefore important that I outright without any reservations express this potential “conflict of interest” which I tried to remedy by being as objective and ethical as possible in conducting the research and in reporting its findings. The other methodological limitation was the over reliance of the study on the participants that were quite close to Sankara and possibly had personal admiration of him because of their comradeship and past working relationship. The use of secondary data (literature, documentaries etc) and interviews of the youth and civil society organisations were deliberate efforts to try balance the narratives and the potential bias from Sankara’s colleagues.

Importance of the Study

Expected contribution of the study

The study sought to provide more clarity and empirical evidence, from an Afrocentric Pan-Africanist perspective, on the gains and mistakes made by Sankara and his government during the four-year-old August revolution. This was done with the aim of using his transformational leadership attributes to governance to explore potential policy instruments that other African countries could attempt in an effort to enhance their own development trajectory. Furthermore,

the study attempted to explore the extent to which Sankara's revolutionary governance in Burkina could be understood to have been premised on Pan-African Nationalism epistemology opposed to just orthodox Pan-Africanism (see the difference between the two in chapter 4). The study also tried to tease out the leadership qualities of Thomas Sankara that could be instrumental to for Africa so that a new crop of thought leaders, thought liberators and critically conscious (see Gumede, 2015) leaders can possibly be inculcated to remedy the leadership "curse" that Africa continues to battle with.

By drawing lessons from our heroes and heroines such as Thomas Sankara, this research tried to add to the body knowledge production of the calibre of thought leaders that Africa is in dire need of. It follows, therefore, that development of unorthodox leadership approaches and strategies based on the legacies and philosophies of some of our erudite leaders from the continent is one developmental aspect that the study attempted to wrestle with.

The main scientific contribution of the study is the application of theoretical lenses that help draw lessons from past development experiences that can be used in shaping the development of other countries, particularly the wellbeing of the people of those countries.

It might be true and a fair assessment that while revolutionaries as people can die, ideas whose time has come cannot die as explained by Sankara just a few days before he died on 15 October 1987. It is increasingly becoming more evident that Africa has got a seemingly insurmountable leadership challenge, especially in the public sector, and specifically with regards to the body politics of the continent. Therefore, I felt it is of utmost importance that we should begin cherishing and learning, retrospectively, more about our leaders as Africans, who left a legacy of self-sacrifice, diligent and disciplined leadership in service of African and its people. This is why Sankara's leadership and governance models were important to study in detail so that efforts could be cogently and systematically made to emulate and nurture a million Sankaras (at least the progressive elements of him). Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe's (erstwhile leader of the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa) articulation of a leader that Africa needs is important to bear in mind. Sobukwe (the Professor as he was affectionately known) observed that "true leadership demands complete subjugation of self, honesty and integrity, uprightness of character; courage and fearlessness, and above all a consuming love for one's people" (cited in Pogrand, 1990).

Not only was Sankara a visionary and humble youthful leader; he also understood that as long as we do not cut the colonial matrix of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) and the umbilical cord that continues to bind us with our previous colonial masters (Rodney, 1972), Africa will unabatedly be a perpetual servant to the West and any other emergent powers in the world. Again, this study set out to explore how Pan African Nationalism (as a theory, ideology and movement) and Afrocentricity theory could be used in pursuing a pro-Africa development agenda. This would hopefully help so that the lingering “post-traumatic colonial disorder” can be done away with in African governments and African minds. The ultimate significance, therefore, of this study, was to unravel governance and developmental lessons from Sankara’s revolutionary project. There are a few studies at least in the Anglophone world, of this magnitude and parameters that have studied Thomas Sankara, his revolution and governance modalities which were in parts closer to this study but also distinctly different.

These handful of studies that may moderately be comparable with this study are mainly substantial academic contributions which go beyond desktop research that yields journal papers and also beyond a host of collections of Sankara’s speeches and interviews and his biographies. A recent edited book by Amber Murrey (2018) for instance, titled *A Certain Amount of Madness: The Life, Politics and Legacies Thomas Sankara*, is one such body of work in the literature which is useful in locating this study within wider body of literature on Sankara development approaches, governance, and African leadership as a whole. Another slightly comparable book which helps locate, compare and contrast this study with relevant literature is titled *African Leaders of the Twentieth Century: Biko, Selassie, Lumumba, Sankara*, by Lindy Wilson, Bereket Habte Selassie, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja and Ernest Harsch (2015).

The difference with this study, however, is that “there is also a tendency towards hagiography, which in turn has meant that too much space was taken up discussing irrelevant details of the personal lives of the icons, space that could have been used to engage in critical discussions of their politics and ideas”, as eloquently put in this book’s review by Mba (2017: 576). This study tried to avoid idolising Sankara while acknowledging and appreciating his efforts in Burkina, it tried to focus more on his works, ideas, philosophies and tangible developmental interventions, than his persona which would run a risk of making him into a cult, something which he also personally abhorred.

Availability of the Data

The availability and ease of access of data on the overall historiography of Thomas Sankara's revolution in Burkina Faso is somewhat adequate, albeit the fact that a lot of it is still in the French language. It is only in the last five years to a decade that a sizeable number of English-speaking scholars have written extensively on Sankara and the Burkina Faso Revolution. Much of the literature focuses mainly on the gains and mishaps of the August revolution and on the manner in which Sankara came into power. On the one hand, some argue that Sankara annexed power through a military coup d'état. On the other hand, others insist that he ascended to the Presidency through a popularly backed revolution where the army and civilians closely collaborated to topple the neo-colonial government at the time because of the unbearable living conditions of Burkinabè, coupled with the faith they had in him as a leader.

However, what is not covered in great detail and clarity is the psycho-social and cultural pride mind-set shift due to the decolonial governance approach that Sankara instilled in the Burkinabé people as a result of his insistence on the need for political, economic and cultural self-reliance of Burkina Faso. In addition, there is no significant amount of literature that uses Thomas Sankara's revolutionary governance in the four years he ruled Burkina Faso as a case study to be intrinsically and systematically understood so that the rest of Africa could draw valuable developmental and leadership lessons from its achievements and failures. It is this knowledge gap, that is more rife in the English speaking world, that the study tries to fill. Availability of data was, however, restricted due to the language barrier alluded to earlier because a lot of the literature and different sources of data are presented in the French language which I am not proficient in.

Biography of Thomas Sankara and Burkina Faso's Brief History

Who is Thomas Sankara?

Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara, was a son of a soldier of the colonial army turned civil servant, born in December 1949 in Yako, grew up, in the course of his father's assignments in the countryside, in contact with the people but shielded from their misery. Some scholars say that his father was an assistant policeman, who was just one of the few indigenous people of Upper

Volta who worked for the French colonial administration (Prairie, 2007). It is said that he was “a conscientious boy who, according to his biographers, demonstrated a precocious seriousness in his studies” (Diallo, 2018). Because of his father’s job, Sankara’s family moved around Burkina Faso a lot as he would be stationed in different towns by the colonial regime. His family moved to Gaoua which is a small town in the Southern part of Burkina Faso, near the Ivory Coast border. It is at this town that Sankara attended primary school. He went on to attend high school in Bobo-Dioulasso (the second biggest city after Ouagadougou), making him part of a select few indigenous Burkinabe`s who were lucky to reach high school level (Prairie, 2007).

After passing his high school relatively well, Sankara was again lucky to be accepted in a military school in Kamboinse`, Kadiogo in Ouagadougou, which made him one of the few young people who were able to further their studies post high school;

It is there that he met Adama Abdoulaye Touré, the establishment’s director of studies and member of the Parti Africain de l’Indépendance, who gathered some of his students for informal political discussions after school hours. It was probably there that the young Thomas Sankara started his ideological training and first heard of imperialism (Diallo, 2018).

Sankara got a scholarship in 1969 with three other students from this military academy to further his studies in Madagascar. He stayed in Madagascar for four years at the officer school where he witnessed the 1972 Malagasy Revolution where scores of students and workers staged protests that eventually toppled the government. It was his witnessing of this revolution that also marked another important political consciousness that forever changed the course of his life. It was in Madagascar where Sankara learned the socio-economic role that the military can play in developing a country, and he subsequently adopted and implemented this strategy in Burkina Faso during his reign.

From Madagascar,

...he moved on to the famous Parachute Training centre in Pau, France. During his officer cadetship he had shone out as an excellent student, both in the classroom and on the sports field. After having completed his military training at Pau, Sankara could boast the best education a young African soldier would ever be likely to obtain (Wilkins, 1989: 378).

Dialo (2018) adds that, when Sankara went back to Upper Volta as an officer, “he was given the command of a training camp and became known for both his rigor and unorthodox ideas, one of which being his belief in the importance of civic and intellectual training of the recruits”. Sankara later shot to prominence in the Upper Volta army where he was now a lieutenant during the brief Burkina-Mali border war (December 1974-January 1975) which he was instructed to command, even though he was reluctant as a politically and ideologically inclined soldier after reading a lot of Marxist and Leninist literature when he was in France for parachute training.

Sankara later denounced that war which he described as “useless and unjust”, and which he skilfully defused with few casualties. This war became known as “The First War of the Poor” as it was over a small piece of land on the border between these two countries. He would later meet his closest friend and would-be comrade and second in command during his Presidency, Blaise Compaore, in Morocco. Sankara briefly became Minister of Information in 1981 and Prime Minister in January 1983 after which he was jailed by the Ouedraogo overnment at the behest of the French government because of his anti-imperialist rhetoric and unflinching patriotism for Burkina Faso.

Burkina Faso’s Brief Historiography

Merely one year later, after the August revolution, Thomas Sankara and his government embarked on an unprecedented act of changing the name of their country from Haute Volta (Upper Volta in English) to Burkina Faso. This was one of the first steps of decolonisation as naming and renaming of spaces, people and constructs are political and cultural acts. Th name Burkina Faso is a word formulated by using linguistic parts from the Burkina’s main languages: Burkina means "free man" in Mooré language which is the most widely spoken indigenous language. Faso is understood to mean "land" in Dyula. Thus, Burkina Faso is generally acknowledged to mean the "country of the free men" or land of upright men. Its citizens are called Burkinabè. The "bè" is a suffix from one other language of Burkina Faso, Fulfulde (Forum, 2019).

In terms of its landscape and geography, Burkina Faso’s land mass is 105,869 square miles (approximately 274,200 square kilometers) in the heart of West Africa region, located towards northern parts of Ghana and Ivory Coast. This is a small landlocked, without large mountains with an average altitude ranging between 200 and 400 meters above sea level. Its capital city

is called Ouagadougou and it is located almost in the center of the country. It was the capital of a powerful Mossi kingdom (who speak Moorè language) and became the seat of French colonial administration in the year 1919. Burkina has a tropical climate with a wet and a dry season. The northern Sahelian zone, which is adjacent to the Sahara desert, is a lot drier than the southern parts of the country, with an estimated 150 to 600 millimetres of rain falling between June and September (ibid). This is a generally dry and arid country, despite the fact that agriculture formed and still forms a huge part of the economy and livelihood of Burkinabè.

Burkina Faso is bordered by six countries; the Ivory Coast, Togo, Ghana, Benin, Niger and Mali. It is a rapidly growing country with an estimated 2019 population of 20.32 million (note that in 1983 there were only 7 million Burkinabè). This therefore, makes Burkina Faso the 59th most populous country globally. The average age in the country said to be just under 17 years old (World Population Review 2019). In its 2005 report, World Health Organization estimated that about 73% of females (girls and women) in Burkina Faso underwent female genital mutilation. This practice, as in many other African countries, is done mainly because of traditional and cultural rituals. Most of the population is located and migrates towards Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso which constitute the core (from the periphery north) and south of Burkina Faso, with a density that goes over 48 people per square kilometre in some areas. Burkina Faso is diverse and multi-ethnic country with an estimated 60 ethnic and linguistic groups and dialects (World Population Review 2019).

Burkina is roughly sub-divided into two parts, each with different historical backgrounds and political cultures: “the eastern and central regions were historically dominated by kingdoms and chieftaincies such as the Mossi at the centre, the Gurmanché in the extreme east and the Fulbe and Tuareg in the north” (World Population Review 2019). Scores of people often migrate to Ghana and Ivory Coast for work as these two countries have stronger economies and mineral resources than Burkina Faso. The capital city, as indicated is Ouagadougou, which is usually and affectionately shortened as “Ouaga” and it has a population of about 1.8 million. According to the World Population Review (2019) statistics, of the 60 indigenous languages in Burkina, there are about 9 dialects. About 40% of the population speaks Moorè, although the official language is still French, because Burkina was a French colony. However, Moorè is, in a sense, the official language that is widely spoken amongst all 60 languages of Burkina.

Post-independence political history of Burkina Faso

The country gained independence in 1960 and its first civilian President was Maurice Yameogo,

...who headed an incompetent civilian government full of French advisers long imbued with the fatalism that nothing could ever change Ouagadougou... Six years later, Lt. Colonel Sangoule Lamizana, seeing that one thing that easily changed would be the President, seized power, made himself a General and ruled for fourteen years (Brittain, 1985: 39).

Upper Volta continued to be a neo-colonial state for two decades under Yameogo and Lamiza's presidencies.

Throughout the 1970s opposition to Lamizana and criticism of the state of the country were voiced with increasing vigour in mostly clandestine meetings and numerous pamphlets and analyses. The regime was completely discredited, and three coups d'etat were in preparation by November 1980 following strikes and demonstrations (ibid: 41).

Colonel Saye Zerbo took over power through a military coup in 1980 and he could still not turn Upper Volta's fortunes around. In 1981 Zerbo implored Sankara to join his government as Minister of Information. Sankara initially refused but he eventually took the job because "for Sankara to have disobeyed the order to join the government in 1981 would have led to his arrest and possible disappearance. He agreed to serve as Minister for six months" (ibid: 42). Zerbo's government did not last due to its repressive nature and it was removed from power through a soft coup in November 1982 where Jean Baptiste Ouedraogo took over as President. Ouedraogo would later appoint Sankara as Prime Minister in January 1983 due to his popularity and admiration by the people as a result of his principles and anti-imperialist rhetoric (Diallo, 2018). The November 1982 coup was the last one in Upper Volta before the 4 August 1983 revolution led by Blaise Compaore, Thomas Sankara, Jean-Baptiste Lingani, and Henri Zongo.

In Burkina Faso, "the average person has a yearly per capita purchasing power parity of only \$860" (1997 World Bank estimate). The 2019 analysis by the World Population Review details the geographical and agricultural dynamics of Burkina Faso as follows:

The country is landlocked, and has few natural resources and a fragile tropical soil, which has to support a comparatively high population density. Overgrazing and deforestation are serious problems which have led to soil degradation, erosion, and desertification. About 85 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, almost entirely at the subsistence level. Less than 10 percent of the agricultural production is cash crops. Less than 10 percent of the agricultural production is cash crops. The most important crop is millet (sorghum and penisetum). In certain regions corn, rice,

groundnuts, vegetables, and yams are cultivated. The main export remains labour. Since early colonial days, migrant laborers from Burkina Faso went to work in the gold mines and plantations of Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Today more than a million Burkinabè live permanently in the Ivory Coast and many more are seasonal migrants. A considerable number of Burkinabè live in France. The currency used in Burkina is CFA franc which is also used by 13 other countries mostly in the Francophone West Africa (World Population Review 2019).

The country's flag features the traditional Pan-African colours. These colours were selected to represent the independence of the nation and its unity with other ex-colonies in Africa. The colours also symbolize the revolution and agriculture. The flag also features a star which stands for the "guiding light" of the revolution' (ibid). See Annexure I for the image of the flag. This flag was inaugurated by Sankara's government together with the new national anthem in 1984, during the one-year anniversary of the August revolution.

Thesis Structure

The thesis comprises of six chapters. The *first chapter*, the Introduction, presents a short explanation why this study was important to undertake and what the trigger points were that compelled the researcher to opt for this research topic. The first section of this chapter problematises the subject matter in a form of an elaborate problem statement, which is immediately followed by research questions and objectives. The scope of the study and its limitations are then presented. The scope of the study sets parameters and delimitations, the where and how aspects of the study while the limitations highlight some of the constraints that the research process encountered. The importance of the study is also articulated, followed by the initial assessment of availability of data and literature on matters related to this topic. Then a short biography of Thomas Sankara and description of the political-economic history of Burkina Faso, predominantly the post-independence era, are given.

Chapter Two makes a critique of Sankara's administration projects, programmes, and initiatives in the four years that he was president. These concrete developmental interventions form the basis for the revolution and it is through their evaluation that the success or failure of the August revolution can best be judged. In *Chapter Three*, contextualisation of Burkina Faso's revolution is made. Furthermore, assessment and critiques of the most important and relevant works on Thomas Sankara's leadership attributes, political philosophies, legacy, and

his revolutionary governance of Burkina Faso mainly in the short four-year period he was at the helm of government are made. *Chapter Four* explains the theoretical pillars of the study. These are Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity theories.

Chapter Five presents the methodology deployed in the study. It explains in great detail how the whole research process was undertaken, explaining all the key informant sources and how they were sourced and reached. It is sub-divided into three main sections. The first one makes a justification for why a mixed methods research approach was used and how it was operationalised. The second section explains the modalities of how quantitative research was undertaken while the last section of the chapter explains how qualitative data was collected, transcribed, analysed and presented. *Chapter Six* presents the research findings and results. It first submits the quantitative results after quantification coding of Sankara's speeches and literature was undertaken. This is followed by a presentation of qualitative results from a thematic analytic process, which is followed by interpretation of mixed/integrated results. Finally, the last chapter, which is *Chapter Seven*, concludes the study and makes recommendations and proposes lessons to be learned from the Burkina experience during Thomas Sankara's governance.

It is important to note that the thesis does not have a standalone literature review chapter per se. That is, I sought to deliberately engage literature across the thesis instead of having a chapter on literature alone. This is the case because, amongst others, I found that two doctoral studies which tackled the same subject matters as mine³ by William Mpofu and Peter Haussler respectively did not have a separate section/chapter on literature. Mpofu's (2017) thesis is titled '*Thabo Mbeki: A philosopher of liberation (a study in political rhetoric)*' and Haussler's (2017) thesis is titled '*Leadership in Africa: A hermeneutic dialogue with Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere on equality and human development*'.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter gave an elaborate background of the study, research problem, research questions and objectives, the scope of the study and its limitations, significance of the study and lastly, mapped the overall outline of the study. In essence, Chapter One was structured in such a way that it acts as the compass and the tour guide for the reader on the

³ These studies are structurally, epistemologically and somewhat methodologically aligned to mine, in that they were also studying important Pan African States men: Thabo Mbeki, Kwame Nkrumah, and Julius Nyerere.

contents of the study. The chapter also explained why the study was important to conduct. I felt it is of utmost importance that we should begin, as Africans, to cherish and learn more about our leaders who left a legacy of self-sacrifice, diligent and disciplined leadership in service of Africans and humanity as a whole.

CHAPTER 2: THE BURKINA FASO REVOLUTION PROGRAMMES AND DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTIONS

Introduction

Beyond the fiery speeches, revolutionary slogans, and rhetoric on and by Thomas Sankara and the Burkina Faso Revolution, it is the interventions and programmes that were implemented in the four years of the revolutionary government that the utility and impact of the revolution can pragmatically be gauged. This chapter therefore details some of the most important developmental programmes, projects, and interventions that Sankara embarked on during his presidency until the revolution was halted after his assassination in 1987. These developmental interventions are sub-divided into four periods representing the four years Sankara was in power. It is worth noting that all these projects, programmes, and initiatives were underpinned by the ultimate economic objective as articulated by Sankara that “our economic ambition is to use the strength of the people of Burkina Faso to provide, for all, two meals a day and drinking water” (Harsch, 2014: 88).

Period 1: Re-birth of a Nation (4 August 1983 – August 1984)

Just two months at the helm, Sankara’s government, steered by the National Council of the Revolution (NCR), hit the ground running by introducing radical reforms that sought to change the very fabric of Burkina Faso society. In an effort to cut unnecessary and fruitless spending by government officials, one of Sankara’s first interventions was to auction the government fleet of luxury vehicles such as Mercedes Benz. He instead opted for the Renault 5 which was the cheapest car available in Burkina Faso at that time. These cheaper cars, henceforth, became the official vehicles that were used by Ministers, himself included (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017). This move undoubtedly meant that a lot of money was saved that would have been used to buy, service and fill up the big fuel tanks of the big engines of the luxury vehicles that were used by cabinet ministers and their security entourage. The money received from the sale of these big cars was channelled to more pressing developmental efforts of the new government.

On another level, much of the powers that traditional leaders (kings and chiefs) wielded were curtailed if not entirely removed from them, such as “the right to tribute payment and forced labour” (ibid: 46). Sankara despised the king-serfs feudal system as it was reminiscent and almost similar to the master-slave relationship. The land that used to be under the control and

management of traditional leaders was expropriated and shared amongst the peasants to produce on it without being required to pay taxes to the chiefs who often times abused their powers. Speirs (1991: 103) notes that,

...the introduction of an agrarian reform, through which all land in Burkina Faso became property of the state and the formation of CDRs in the villages, also presented the government with serious difficulties focusing on the transfer of power away from the traditional chiefs. As young people in rural areas became organised in the CDRs which assumed responsibility for allocating land, the authority of chiefs was weakened.

Housing projects of a huge magnitude which were never seen in Burkina Faso before were also initiated and thousands of units were built. This was done to end urban slums in big cities like Ouagadougou. In April 1984, the government embarked on a massive land redistribution campaign for building of houses for residential purposes. The land was taken from individual elites, corporates (mainly French owned), and also from traditional leaders control. Most of these houses were built by the people themselves offering their man power. In many documentaries about the Burkina Faso revolution, Sankara can be seen helping one community with building a house with his bare hands. In the same month, the NCR government launched an irrigation project which targeted 16 000 hectares of land as part of the efforts to increase tenfold the agricultural output of Burkina (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017).

Furthermore, the NCR government banned female genital mutilation (excision), forced marriages and polygamy which was rampant and considered part of the culture of Burkinabe. Speirs (1991: 102) adds that “the emphasis which was given by Sankara to the emancipation of women, including a campaign against prostitution and the drafting of a new ‘family code’ which would outlaw polygamy, was perhaps one of the most contentious issues in the attempt to transform society in Burkina Faso.” According to Harsch (2015), this “new family code set a minimum age for marriage, established divorce by mutual consent, recognized a widow’s right to inherit, and suppressed the bride price”. In addition, still related to women empowerment interventions, Sankara’s government appointed a lot of women in key strategic ministries as ministers and directors as he believed that women were equally capable to participate in government and all programmes of the revolution. He ensured that girls stayed in school even when they were pregnant, just like their male counterparts who were not expelled from school for impregnating girls. Contraceptives were also widely made available as a result of a massive roll out of clinics and pharmacies in villages across Burkina Faso

(Kongo and Zeilig, 2017). Dismantling these long-held gender roles and “the place of women” in society was indeed one of the tough battles that Sankara had to fight head-on which further led to his isolation by conservative and patriarchal men who were hell-bent on maintaining the status quo that thrived off the subjugation of women.

Amongst many of his development-oriented projects, it is not widely known that in the capital, Ouagadougou, Sankara converted the “the army’s provisioning store into a state-owned supermarket open to everyone (the first supermarket in the country)” (ibid: xi). Even after becoming president, he kept his salary at CFA 136 736 per month (equivalent to US\$462 at the time) which was the same salary he earned as a captain in the army (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017: 45). He argued that all public servants, ministers included, had to earn salaries commensurate to their qualifications, irrespective of the position they occupied in government. This meant that a minister who was a teacher or nurse by profession would earn what teachers or nurses earn, just as he as president earned what a captain in the army earned. Government spending on civil servants was bloated and had to be contained because, as Sankara (2016: 163) argued in 1985, “out of a budget of 58 billion [CFA Francs]⁴, 30 000 government employees monopolise 30 billion, and that leaves nothing for everyone else. This is not normal.” It is also important to note that his wife, Mariam Sankara, who was a nurse, earned more than him, as president of Burkina Faso. She earned CFA 192 690 (ibid) which is approximately US\$651, meaning that she earned US\$189 more than her husband who occupied the highest office in Burkina Faso.

Period 2: Golden Years of the Revolution (September 1984 – September 1985)

Another major programme embarked on in this second year of the revolution was what was called the “Vaccination Commando” where even children in rural areas were reached and vaccinated against common diseases such as meningitis, measles and yellow fever which used to kill thousands of children. Over 2 million children were vaccinated across Burkina Faso in just two weeks, which made it the largest vaccination campaign in Africa in such a short period (Harsch, 2014). The number of vaccinated children was approximately threefold the number of vaccinations in the previous campaigns under his predecessors’ regimes (ibid). Harsch (2014: 78), who is one of the most devoted biographers and scholars on Sankara, explains that, “according to a joint evaluation by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health... health worker morale

⁴ My emphasis/insertion

increased significantly, as did greater overall public demand for better health services.” Harsch (2014) further notes that “most immediately, the Vaccination Commando meant that in 1985 the usual epidemics of measles and meningitis – which often claimed the lives of between 18 000 and 50 000 children – did not occur” (ibid). In essence, this implies that Sankara’s government, through its insistence on hastily implementing and solving pressing needs of society, was able to save about 50 000 lives which could have been lost had they not forged ahead with the Vaccination Commando, going against the caution of foreign donor agencies which argued that it was risky and not feasible to roll out such a massive vaccination campaign in just two weeks (Harsch, 2014).

Furthermore, “literacy campaigns were launched through the CDRs in 1984, while plans to improve the agricultural sector focused on the improved management of water resources, the implementation of large-scale irrigation schemes and programmes to halt environmental degradation” (Speirs, 1991: 101). These literacy campaigns were designed such that those who already had acquired certain professional skills such as nursing, teaching, law, etc, were tasked with helping their fellow neighbours in communities to read and write. They basically applied the “each one teach one” concept which was premised on the “Ubuntu” philosophy.⁵ Therefore, for the first time in the history of Burkina Faso, those who used to be marginalised such as women and peasants were given access to basic education for literacy. The NCR government support was in terms of building thousands of classrooms and erecting new schools, coupled with drastically reducing school fees (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017). Speirs (1991: 101) further adds that, in “addition to reforestation and anti-erosion schemes, the government started a campaign known as ‘les trois luttes’ or the three struggles, against: (i) indiscriminate grazing of arable land (ii) tree felling without permission, and (iii) deliberate burning of bush vegetation”. These varied forms of interventions from environmental restoration efforts to improved and systematic irrigation projects played a significant role in the eventual food self-sufficiency ideal which was attained by 1986.

Jean-Claude Kongo and Leo Zeilig (2017: 199) argue that, “some of the top-down initiatives were successful and incredibly audacious, and thousands of people are alive today as a result of them.” They further add that primary healthcare is one of the sectors where the NCR government registered one of their greatest and commendable achievements (ibid). For

⁵ This is a Southern African philosophy which generally means that ‘I am my brother’s (or sister’s) keeper’ and that for me to be successful and fulfilled in life, the next person should be as well. It is popularly known to mean ‘I am because you are’.

instance, “infant mortality fell from 208 in every 1000 births in 1982, to 145 in 1984; local pharmacies were built in approximately 5 834 of the 7 500 villages” (ibid). September 1984 marked the day of solidarity where men were encouraged to switch roles with women by, for instance, going to the market for shopping of food and preparing meals at home, which is something that was traditionally done by women in Burkina Faso. This practical exercise was enforced and encouraged by Sankara so that men could get first-hand experience and know what women go through in taking care of families with meagre resources. As expected, a lot of men did not take kindly to this day of solidarity; some rebelled against it, although others participated. It was a great learning curving in conscientising men about the plight of women. In October of the same year (1984), the government cancelled the “long-standing debt on rural Burkinabe” (ibid). This was head tax and land tax rural Burkinabe had to pay to the state and at times to traditional leaders who administered land use in rural areas.

In November 1984, the Sankara administration became the first African government to publicly accept and declare that the HIV/AIDS pandemic was real and posed a serious health and socio-economic risk to Burkinabe (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017). This is evidence that Sankara was not a conservative person, but a trendsetter whose primary objective was to ensure the overall wellbeing of Burkinabe, especially the poor and marginalised. In adherence to its self-proclaimed character as a participatory, people-centred, and popular and democratic revolution, the NCR government invited ordinary Burkinabe to attend the government budget meeting in December 1984 where about 3000 delegates attended the deliberations. It was at this conference that an agreement was reached to deduct one-month salary from top-ranking government workers and also deduct half of one-month salary of all other civil servant so that the government could fund social development projects (ibid) as part of its endogenous development strategy. This inward looking and self-sacrificial model of funding the government’s developmental programmes might have had positive but unintended consequences. These included instilling an ethical working spirit, and boosting civil servants’ morale because they knew that if they misappropriated developmental funds or engaged in fruitless expenditure, they might be liable to fund the deficit from their pockets.

Kongo and Zeilig (2017: xii) further note that, “in the same month [December 1984], all residential rents of 1985 are suspended and a campaign is launched to plant 10 million trees to slow the southward expansion of the Sahara desert.” The rationale for suspension of paying of rent for 1985 was to help ease the economic burden that the working class was experiencing

due to the tough economic climate in Burkina Faso as a result of the self-imposed austerity interventions the government embarked on in order to pay for the ambitious social and economic programmes in health, education, infrastructure development, and agriculture. In addition, and most importantly, the suspension of rents and in certain cases, putting a ceiling on the rentals landlords could charge, was so that Burkinabe could build their own houses and stop being perpetual renters. This symbolised one intervention aspect of the self-propelled sustainable development that Sankara sought for Burkina Faso.

With regards to the planting of over 10 million trees, Sankara was an environmentalist even before issues of climate change had gained much traction and attention globally. In initiating the tree planting project, he infused the age-old Burkinabe tradition of planting trees for every ceremony such as weddings and any other celebration. Therefore, resuscitation of this old partly-abandoned tradition was not a difficult task as it was already part of the culture of Burkinabe before colonialism. In addition, “in the villages in the developed river valleys, each family was given the means and the obligation to plant one hundred trees per year. The cutting and selling of firewood was brought under strict control” (Rob, 2014). This was a novel aspect of Sankara’s efforts to realise African Renaissance from his positionality in a small landlocked West African country.

Period 3: Turbulent Years (October 1985 – October 1986)

Between February and April 1986, the NCR government, with the assistance of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), rolled out another massive literacy campaign in all the major nine languages of Burkina Faso. This campaign is said to have involved approximately 35 000 people (ibid). It is important to note that the reason why these literacy campaigns were conducted in the nine vernacular languages of Burkina Faso was because Sankara acknowledged that French was not the epitome of intelligence, pedagogy, or epistemology. He sought to decolonise education and part of this was insisting that African languages could and should be used as academic language in schools so that they can be developed and respected the same way French and English are. Some teachers’ unions and student organisations in universities, although initially bought into the idea of infusing local languages in the school systems, later fought against these efforts because they might not have fully embraced the mammoth task that this entailed (Harsch, 2014).

A practical example where Sankara rebelled against the hegemony of French in Burkina Faso, and how he disregarded entrenched and orthodox so-called politically correct rules was during “one traditional ceremonial exchange of New Year greetings which was to be presented by the diplomatic corps to the president of Burkina Faso.” It is said that, “in a rare occurrence, Sankara had the ceremony relocate to Pabre, a small village some 20km from the capital. No less rare an occurrence was Sankara’s response to the message from the doyen of the diplomatic corps; Sankara gave this in Moore, the national language of the country, which was then interpreted in French” (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017: 184). This period was extremely difficult for Sankara and the NCR government because of many internal and external contradictions. Englebert (2018 [1998]: 60) reiterates that “the year 1985 was therefore difficult for the NCR, which relied more and more on violence, constraint and repression to stay in power. In the course of 1986, however, additional groups were incorporated into the regime or given more room in an attempt to enlarge its political foundations.”

Period 4: Isolation and Demise of the Revolution (November 1986 – 15 October 1987)

In January 1987, the UN-assisted programme brought river blindness under control in Burkina Faso (Englebert, 2018). As alluded to, with regards to female mutilation, Putteho-Ngonda (2013) was of the view that “Thomas Sankara was one of the first heads of state, perhaps the only one in his time, to condemn female excision, a position that reflected his unwavering commitment to the emancipation of women and the struggle against all forms of discrimination against women.” This was further evidenced by the fact that, throughout Sankara’s tenure at the helm of government, “the CDRs of women and youth mobilised to build tens of thousands of improved stoves in order to reduce the consumption of firewood. Hundreds of wells were sunk to provide reliable drinking water to those who lacked it” (Rob, 2014).

Martin (1987: 93) details the extent of austerity measures the Sankara government undertook in the four years of its reign, and the rapid increase in health and education expenditure; “civil-service pay fell by 40 per cent in real terms under Sankara’s rule; in contrast, per capita spending on health-care rose by 42 per cent and on education by 26 per cent.” This contrast in the reduction of government’s salary bill and a sharp increase in government expenditure on education and health budgets indicates where Sankara’s administration priorities were. Again, the near half cuts in civil servants’ salaries depicts the point that government workers were

meant to be servant leaders and officials for the greater good of Burkina society, not for the society to serve government officials for them to lead a luxurious life while the majority of Burkinabes lived in squalor.

As part of its infrastructure projects, the NCR government under Sankara's leadership built a railroad from Ouagadougou to Tambao, a manganese rich town in efforts to increase production of manganese in Burkina. This railroad was built with bare hands by ordinary citizens, because the international financial institutions refused to fund the project (Murrey, 2018). At an institutional level, the revolution restructured key institutions so as to overhaul the previous neo-colonial system. Harsch (2015) explains that,

In addition to restructuring the judiciary, the military, and other state institutions, Sankara's governing council attacked corruption and conspicuous consumption by the nation's elite. Frugality and integrity became the new watchwords, and public trials sent scores of dignitaries to jail for embezzlement and fraud. Government ministers had their salaries and bonuses cut and their limousines taken away. Sankara publicly declared all his assets, kept his own children in public school, and rebuffed relatives who came seeking state jobs.

This extract demonstrates how important it was for Sankara himself and his family to lead a modest life similar, as much as possible, to how ordinary Burkinabe lived. That is why he kept his children in the public schooling system so that they too got the same education and treatment that the majority of children in Burkina Faso got. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for many government leaders today in Africa, as they rather take their children to private schools and they shun using their countries' health systems when they and their families fall ill.

Harsch (2014: 91), having met and interviewed Sankara a number of times, makes an experientially insightful assessment of the four key recurrent themes that characterised many of the developmental projects, programmes and other initiatives undertaken by the NCR government in the four years it was in power:

First, economic projects had to use local materials, labour, and financing as much as possible in order to reduce reliance on foreign aid and imports. Second, with equity as a watchword, those at the top had to lose some of their perks so that those at the bottom could benefit. Third,

whatever limited financial resources the government had at its disposal were allocated as a priority to rural areas, not the urban centres. And fourth, in a country of scant rainfall and a harsh climate, environmental concerns had to be integrated into all development efforts.

The third theme is particularly important because it further sheds more light on the notion that Sankara's administration was adamant and unequivocal on the need to decentralise power and the distribution of resources from the urban centres like the capital, Ouagadougou, to where the majority of Burkinabe lived and worked the land, which is the rural and semi-urban areas. This, therefore, explains why in the country's budget, agriculture often took the lion's share to the extent that the 1986 five year plan called the People's Program for Development indicated that "71 percent of projected investments for the productive sectors were allocated to agriculture, livestock, fishing, wildlife, and forests" (ibid: 96). This skewed budget in favour of agriculture over other sectors is not surprising because Sankara himself told scores of people during the second anniversary celebrations of the revolution in August 1983 that agriculture was the main building block for their endogenous socio-economic development. He described it (agriculture) as "the nerve and principal lever of our economic and social development" (ibid: 95). In the same agricultural sector, more investments and priority were given to food crops as opposed to cash crops as used to be the case during the colonial and neo-colonial regimes that came before the August revolution.

One of the tangible outcomes of these concerted efforts in rehabilitating and better managing food crops and agricultural produce across the value chain was a massive increase in cereal production to about 75 percent in the period 1983-1986. These impressive yields were, according to Harcsh (ibid), attributed, in part, to better rainfalls during that period, but more importantly, to the fact that the Sankara government increased the total amount of land that was irrigated from 6 percent prior to the revolution to 25 percent between 1984 and 1987. In addition, a dam was built by volunteers at the Sourou Valley where 8000 hectares of land was for the first time irrigated to grow sugar cane for a new sugar refinery. This was further enhanced by the fact that, use of fertilisers rose by 56 percent across the country between 1984 and 1987. In order to minimise "the high costs of imported fertiliser, much of this increase involved greater use of organic fertilisers. In 1987, some 180 tractors were imported for a number of large-scale cooperative projects" (ibid: 96).

Sankara's life and his administration were cut short after the purchase of these tractors and other investments in ambitious projects. But more significant is the revelation by Harsch (ibid)

that the NCR administration had acknowledged some of their mistakes and they were beginning to correct them when Sankara was killed, which spelled the demise of the revolution itself. Local traditional leaders were finally included in the last drafted (amended) land management commissions of 1987, shortly before Sankara was killed. We can only speculate about how the revolutionary government would have been perceived by traditional leaders after their involvement in land reform programmes, because initially they felt side-lined and disrespected by Sankara and his administration.

Conclusion

Presented in this Chapter is an overview and assessment of some of the most important, notable and concrete developmental interventions that Sankara's NCR government introduced and implement in the four years of its lifespan. These projects and interventions formed the crux of what today is known as the radical audacious August revolution because in the space of just four years, the material lived conditions of scores of people changed for the better, as their basic needs were met, such as two meals a day and clean drinking water. The chapter was subdivided into four sections marking the four years of the revolution. These periods were characterised by different developmental programmes and different challenges until the last period (1986-1987) where the revolution was faced with a lot of internal and external contradictions, leading to the untimely assassination of Thomas Sankara in October 1987. More on these contradictions and shortcomings of the August revolution is revealed in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT – SANKARA’S BURKINA FASO

Introduction

This chapter reviews and critiques relevant literature related to the sub-themes of this study, such as Pan Africanism, African Renaissance, African states governance and political leadership in Africa; “big men” politics, African development (or underdevelopment) and revolutionaries; Thomas Sankara’s governance philosophies (Sankarism), Burkina Faso’s historiography and development trajectory. As Rocco (2009: 1250) explains,

...literature review might be seen as casting a broad net around an area to explore the topic. The net should include presentation of the history or chronology of the manuscript’s main idea. In a history, the author should acquaint the reader with the major authors writing in favour of or in opposition to the main idea and the state of the current empirical research.

In addition, Boote and Beile (2005) further explain the importance and use of literature review in a study by arguing that “using literature reviews to connect the problem, purpose, and discussion sections is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research.” Thus, in line with what Boote and Beile (ibid), Rocco (2009: 125) and others have said, I undertook a comprehensive review of relevant literature for this study in this chapter and across the thesis.

Contextualising the Revolution

Pan Africanism as a form of an ideology, and African Renaissance, which is simply understood to be about the renewal of African socio-political, economic, cultural and linguistic systems, ought to be explained in detail for the purposes of this study. Pan Africanism is concisely defined by Chinweizu (1987: 148) as “a movement for the redemption and rehabilitation of the black race, wherever they live in the world”. African Renaissance, as advanced and conceptualised by former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, comprises of five key pillars. These are, “the encouragement of cultural exchange; the emancipation of African women from patriarchy; the mobilization of youth; the broadening, deepening sustenance of democracy; and the initiation of sustainable economic development” (Mavimbela, 1997).

Burkina Faso, then Upper Volta, was a poverty-stricken French colony even after it gained political independence in 1960. One of the changes Sankara made when he took control of government from the neo-colonial government that was managing the state on behalf of France, was to rename that country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso in 1984. Burkina Faso generally means “land of the upright men” or “the country of dignified people” (Skinner, 1988: 443). The country had a high illiteracy rate estimated to be at 95 per cent (Brittain, 1985). In the midst of these challenges that Sankara inherited when he took power in 1983 through a popular mass revolution, or what some argue was a mere coup, albeit of a different kind because it was supported by the masses, his charismatic and revolutionary leadership sparked unimaginable changes in peoples’ lives. A comprehensive account of a wave of socio-economic and cultural changes that happened, led by the popular masses themselves, is better articulated by Brittain (1985: 46),

An unprecedented explosion of popular confidence and creativity was seen in myriad small development initiatives across the country. From the forming of an anti-apartheid movement in the university and seminars on imperialism by the women's police, to the building of villas, airstrips and dams in the remotest corners of the country there was evidence everywhere of a transformation of people's lives by their own initiative. Particularly remarkable was the extent to which the regime's progressive words on women's position and the need to change it were seized and acted upon.

One of the potentially unfolding arguments from the literature is that Sankara’s approach to governance was indeed Pan Africanist. However, I argue in this study that, not only was Sankara’s leadership and governance Pan Africanist, it was what could be understood as “Pan African Nationalism”. The latter gives more weight to reinforcing the importance of psychological decolonisation of Africans and resolving its national problems through local efforts so as to remain sovereign in its interaction with the world. This approach to international relations and domestic governance in the hostile global political economy, can best be conceptualised by using the Pan Africanist philosophy of Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s conception of moving the centre of power relations between Africa and Euro-American bloc (Wa Thiong’o, 1993).

Sankara’s rule of Burkina Faso was interrogated within the concept of this notion of “moving the centre” because he understood that the Burkinabe had to unlearn all forms of indoctrinations

that were forced on Africans since the period of slavery, colonialism, and the current neo-colonial era where African governments still have intimate and exploitative relationships with their former colonial masters. Decolonial scholars call this phenomenon “coloniality”.⁶ Sankara sought to break away from this tradition. Most notable amongst many of his achievements in his short-lived rule of Burkina Faso was the promotion of women’s rights so as to ensure gender equality and equity. In implementing and institutionalising this noble and unprecedented policy, which was unheard of in those years, Sankara,

Decreed 22 September 1984 as the day for husbands to do their family shopping so that they would know what this task entailed. He banned prostitution, and in an unprecedented action, named women to about one-quarter of his ministerial posts: they were put in charge not only of family affairs, health, and culture, but also of such key ministries as the environment and the budget (Skinner, 1988: 444).

Skinner’s (1988) article titled, *Sankara and the Burkinabé Revolution: Charisma and Power, Local and External Dimensions*, is particularly relevant for this study as, amongst others, it attempted to address one of the research questions of this study (see Problem Statement in Chapter One). In this article, Skinner (ibid: 440) asks a pertinent question, “how can present-day African leaders mobilize their followers to deal with societal problems in the face of so many unpleasant realities in a larger and increasingly culturally integrated global community?”

Sankara’s Political Thought

During his early days as a junior soldier in the Burkina Faso military, Sankara was already immersed in studying revolutionary theory, and he admired the Cuban Revolution of 1959 led by Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara. He was a self-proclaimed “student” of Marxist theory which he found to be relevant for helping him get a better understanding of his country’s socio-economic ills and political impasse, which had led to many coup d’états since independence in 1961. Sankarism is Sankara’s radical and pragmatic politico-economic-

⁶ This refers to the continuation of institutional memory and practices of colonisers even long after they have left their colonies. The fibre of politics, economics, social organisation of society and its cultural expressions remain the same as those that were practiced when colonisers were directly governing the colonies, only that this time these processes are overseen and facilitated by locals. See for instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and Mpofu (2017) for a detailed understanding of this concept.

cultural and environmental philosophy that is based on his leadership and governance approaches when he was President of Burkina Faso.

It is important to note that Sankara did not coin political thought himself; it came to be known as such after he died and his followers and admirers then used this term to encapsulate his political thoughts and governance strategy. He was not a theorist or intellectual in a Western sense. Instead, he was a doer who, however, understood the importance of theory in guiding practice and policy. Murrey (2015: 1) describes Sankarism as “a Pan African, anti-imperialist, and communist philosophy that emphasizes holistic social transformation and the permanent dismantling of the (neo)imperial structures of dispossession through the collective energies and everyday actions of African people.”

Another key aspect of Sankara’s political thought that has a direct bearing on the development discourse in the contemporary African continent is a selfless leadership character, modest living standards even when in power, and despising of personality cults by those in leadership positions. In short, Sankara practiced what he preached. Unlike many heads of state at the time and currently, Sankara was fiercely opposed to his idolisation; he disapproved of the unnecessary display of his portraits on walls of government offices and in public spaces (ibid). Sankara (1985: 52), in his infamous speech known as *The Political Orientation Speech*, contends that theirs was a “democratic revolution”. The notion of a democratic revolution and popular mass revolution is also investigated in greater detail by this study. Questions such as, can a military backed revolution be deemed democratic? What was Sankara’s conception of democracy at the time? Does Western characterisation of democracy work in Africa, especially in the light of Muammar Qaddafi’s death and its aftermath in Libya?

As a Pan Africanist, Sankara did not only fight imperialism in his country, but he understood the fundamental basic principle of Pan Africanism that all Africans at home (in Africa) and abroad (in the diaspora) should fight a unified battle against white supremacy, imperialism and (neo)colonialism. That is why this was reflected in Burkina Faso’s foreign policy in the sense that, 1) Burkina Faso was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, a movement of countries that were mostly in the Global South which did not want to take sides (between the West and the East) during the Cold War. 2) Sankara canvassed the support of the Organisation of African

Unity (OAU) member states not to pay colonial debt (collectively) that the countries incurred during colonialism (Sankara, 2007)⁷.

Sankara's political thought could be described as independent and contextually nuanced because even for those leaders he respected like Qaddafi or Fidel Castro, he always sought to maintain his political ideals and did not wholesomely import ideologies without customising them for his country. On Non-Aligned countries, he put it this way,

We the Non-Aligned countries are of the opinion that the politics of blocs is harmful to world peace. We refuse to be either be backyards of the West or beachheads of the East. Though we are willing to cooperate with both, we demand the right to be different (Tabi, 2015: 114).

As evidence that Sankara was a transformative and revolutionary leader, in a literal sense of the word, after the August popular revolution, he made sure that the transitional government was not only composed of military officials, but included civilians (Harsch, 2013). A national movement called the National Council of the Revolution (CNR) was established immediately after the hybrid military-civilian revolution. Both this movement and the cabinet had civilians occupying top positions in the new government. More importantly, when asked what ideology he subscribed to, he never minced his words when insisting that their revolution was influenced by Marxist theory, Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution, but they did not religiously subscribe to any of these theories or ideologues. He further argued that "they were followers of neither Jerry Rawlings, nor of Muammar Qaddafi, nor of any other, and that their own revolution was based on local realities" (Skinner, 1988: 441).

Ideologically, Sankara did not shy away to admit that he personally found Marxism appealing, theoretically. He, however, did not impose his ideological orientation in the revolutionary process and government he was leading as it included other leftist civilians who were not necessarily Marxists. "Sankara and his colleagues called theirs 'a democratic and popular revolution'" (Harsch, 2013: 362). Furthermore, as evidence of his ideological clarity and as an indication that Sankara was a Thought Leader, Andriamirado (1987: 58) reveals that, "during one visit to Libya, Qaddafi apparently did press Sankara to adopt his 'Green Book' approach,

⁷ Note that all citations that have Sankara as the author after his death in 1987 imply that these are compilations of his speeches and interviews into books that were published long after Sankara's death.

but Sankara replied: ‘We are not exactly political virgins. Your experience interests us, but we want to live our own’” (Harsch, 2013: 362). Africa, with little Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and foreign aid in whatever form, can advance its own developmental agenda that is defined by Africans themselves, without using the “north-bound gaze” as articulated by Ramose (2003b). This study will use Burkina Faso’s different development programmes (such as the Popular Development Programme and Battle of the Railways) that were pioneered by Sankara’s regime to demonstrate that endogenous development and self-sustenance is possible when the right kind of leaders govern.

Arguably one of the greatest heads of state in Africa, Sankara was not just concerned about the wellbeing and development of Burkina Faso alone. He was a staunch Pan Africanist who believed that for global imperialism and neo-colonialism to be defeated, all African states and the Global South had to work together and speak with one voice. This was evident in his speeches and stances on international relations matters where his foreign policy was robust and unequivocally anti-imperialist. Murray (2016: 2) reiterates that “Sankara was an anti-imperial political activist-cum-intellectual revolutionary who actively and charismatically cultivated egalitarian political policies”. One of the many of his speeches which stands out, showing his unapologetic Pan Africanist foreign policy stance was delivered at the UN 39th General Assembly in New York in 1984. In this, speech he said,

We must succeed in producing more—producing more, because it is natural that he who feeds you also imposes his will [...]. We are free. He who does not feed you can demand nothing of you. Here, however, we are being fed every day, every year, and we say, ‘Down with imperialism!’ Well, your stomach knows what’s what (ibid: 2)

This quote by Sankara is one of many where he would fearlessly and eloquently speak his mind on the importance of self-reliance and genuine sovereignty of former colonies so that they could craft their own destinies without political meddling into their affairs by their former colonial masters and other super powers. Sankara was a decolonial leader in the echelons of political power in Burkina Faso. Political diplomacy, reconciliation, and peace-building for him did not trump a genuine and urgent call for justice by and for the downtrodden of the Earth, and indeed the disenfranchised Burkinabe.

One of the widely hailed achievements of Sankara's administration which was indicative that the August 1983 revolution was indeed supported by ordinary masses in Burkina Faso is the fact that approximately 10 million trees were planted in Burkina Faso in a space of four years of his Presidency. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, announced that Burkina Faso had managed to eradicate hunger (Murrey, 2016; Harsch, 2013). This would not have been possible without the agency and support of ordinary masses of Burkina Faso.

Sankara was ahead of his time. Pierre Rabhi, pioneer of agro-ecology, once mentioned that Sankara wanted to make agro-ecology national policy that would help improve his broader egalitarian policy and help conserve the environment while ensuring food security and sustainable agricultural practices (Murrey, 2016; Oudet, 2012). Pierre Rabhi (a leading and pioneering agro-ecologist) explains that agro-ecology "stems from a scientific approach with special reference to the biological phenomena and associates agricultural development with the protection and regeneration of the natural environment" (Oudet, 2012: 463). Based on his ecological and environmental consciousness, it is arguable that Sankara would have vehemently opposed the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Burkina Faso, which are now used in many African countries like South Africa.

Furthermore, Sankara was very conscious and sensitive to gender inequality and patriarchy in Burkina society, which led him to initiate many programs that empowered women. He appointed women in key positions in his cabinet and on March 8, 1987 during International Women's Day, he made a strong statement on rights of women and their significance for the sustainability of their revolution. He said, "there is something crucial missing: women. They have been excluded from the joyful procession [...]. The revolution's promises are already a reality for men. But for women, they are still merely a rumour. And yet the authenticity and the future of our revolution depend on women" (Murrey, 2012: 4).

The cultural renaissance of the Burkinabe' people was one of the key programmes that Sankara worked tirelessly to achieve. Amongst others, he insisted that indigenous languages be used formally in government and in schools so as to counter the hegemonic influence of French culture, through its monopoly use in Burkina Faso's formal political and economic sectors. Furthermore, he also encouraged and supported manufacturing of clothes in Burkina Faso by Burkinabe` for Burkinabe`. He made sure that public servants wore clothes that were proudly

made in Burkina while at work. All this he did, and was able to convince many public servants to do, because he led by example as he would always wear clothes made and woven in Burkina Faso even when he travelled internationally. This “traditional” Burkina Faso clothing made by locals is called “*faso dan fani*”. One of the biggest films and art festivals in West Africa, FESPACO, is held biennially in Burkina Faso. It is a Pan African Film and Television Festival held in Ouagadougou which attracts film makers and actors from all over the continent to share their craft, showcase their work and learn from one another about film production and the film industry at large. Sankara strongly supported this festival during his presidency, because he understood the importance of cultural expression and exchange through mass media and its impact on the psyche and consciousness of people. FESPACO was not his initiative; it existed long before he took power, but he nonetheless supported the idea.

With a renewed pride in African culture and history would come African Renaissance and a united Africa. Mod (2013: 2) argues that, “Sankara was the first apostle of the African Renaissance, taken over and perfected by former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa”. This shows a bit of continuity in some African leaders who may have drawn some inspiration and strength from Sankara and his predecessors in Africa and the diaspora. I would slightly disagree with Mod for suggesting that Sankara was “the first apostle of African Renaissance” because Cheikh Anta Diop could be argued to be one of the key scholars who initially strongly pushed for African Renaissance, even though he might not have used these exact words. Gumede (2013: 455), while making a case for what he terms “African economic renaissance”,⁸ also adds that “the African Renaissance concept was first articulated by Cheikh Anta Diop in the middle of the 20th century and it has been popularized by Thabo Mbeki during the 21st century.” Mod (2013: 2-3) further assesses the state of affairs in Africa by asking this pertinent and timely question,

What would Thomas Sankara have made of today’s Africa? Like Rawlings of Ghana, Museveni of Uganda, Kagame of Rwanda, and many other African leaders, he would have rejected the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a neocolonial dispensation engaged in the “race hunting” of Africans as in the days of slavery. Sankara would have used his patriotism to support Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, and called for the total liberation of Africa from Western donors and their brand of ‘poverty alleviation’.

⁸ This refers to the need for Africans to have agency and ownership in the economic system(s) they deem most appropriate for Africa’s development and rebirth (Gumede, 2013).

The *modus operandi* and ideological orientation that influenced and shaped Sankara's governance approach was Pan Africanism and African Renaissance. This seems to be the converging point for most scholars and activists who have written extensively on prominent African ideologues and leaders of the 20th and 21st century. The tactics and methods these leaders used and believed in differed in many ways. For instance, there are different strands of Pan Africanism (Du Bois, Garvey, and Nkrumah typologies). However, the desired ends were similar, which was the independence and self-reliance of Black people in Africa and in the diaspora.

A classical case in point on the different approaches that were taken by Pan African leaders is between Malcom X and Martin Luther King in the United States of America. The former believed that African Americans and Africans in general had a moral obligation and duty to free themselves from oppressive regimes through any means necessary, by retaliating violently if they are violently attacked. The latter believed that a "Ghandian"⁹ pacifist approach was a better way to fight for freedom, without resorting to violent means, even when violently attacked. For a detailed discussion of the differing perspectives of Pan Africanism by leading African scholars and African American activists, see Chapter Four, specifically a section titled "historical background on Pan Africanism".

Women participation as a pre-requisite for success of African rebirth

There is a famous song in South Africa, *wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo*,¹⁰ which means that if you strike a woman you strike a rock. This saying implies that women are very strong and resilient as a rock and that they have an undying spirit even in the face of persecution and marginalisation – still they rise, to paraphrase Maya Angelou (1978). Further drawing from Africa's rich well of wisdom, there is another Sesotho saying which also demonstrates the importance of women in society. The saying goes; *mosadi o tshwara thipa ka bohaleng*, which means that a woman can hold a knife at the sharp end for the survival of her family and beloved

⁹ Mahatma Ghandi was a political and religious activist in India and South Africa who believed that violence had no place in the world, talking and diplomacy for him was the *modus operandi* irrespective of how brutal and violent the aggressors are.

¹⁰ On the 9th August, 1956 in South Africa, women protested the Apartheid pass laws by marching to Pretoria, South Africa's capital city, to register their dissatisfaction of having to carry identification documents with them at all time. This was a famous song that they sang at that time.

ones. These two African idioms symbolise the importance that pre-colonial Africa placed on women and their participation in societies and empires. Cheikh Anta Diop (1989) makes a compelling scientific case for this in his book, *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa*, when he argues that most African cultures were matriarchal and women had authority and occupied powerful positions in society. Diop used the two-cradle hypothesis to make a case for two different geographical zones, the North and the South Zones. The general argument is that matriarchy was birthed in the agricultural South (in Africa), whereas patriarchy has its roots in the nomadic North (Diop, 1989). I argue that Sankara was culturally grounded, understood and acknowledged the significance of the emancipation of women from the modern-day shackles that bind them and prevent them from being active citizens in their communities the same way males are. This would thus explain why Sankara took a firm stand on many issues that sought to marginalise women from partaking in any facet of their country's development agenda.

Unlike in many African states after gaining independence in the 1960's, where the new African elite that took power would suddenly change their living standards, which included marrying second or third wives, Sankara did not follow this path. Bouwer (2010: 2) better captures this trend, using the Democratic Republic of Congo as a case study: "In many African societies, 'big men' took on new wives as their status rose, in part because they could pay the bride wealth and in part as a means of extending their alliances." It is reported that prime ministers, presidents, ministers and other high ranking officials in the newly independent African states would marry second wives who were deemed to be more educated and Europeanised so that they can walk side by side with their husband in diplomatic events, as their previous masters used to do with their wives (ibid).

This phenomenon was the antithesis of the anti-colonial struggle because once the "war" was won and African countries were gaining independence, men who assumed power isolated their partners who fought with them during colonialism. It is this patriarchal culture that Sankara fought tirelessly against and in all the initiatives he undertook, he tried to change males' mindsets towards and about women in politics, the economy, and socially. This was a daunting task for him because it not easy to change old habits, especially those which are dressed in cultural undertones.

In the book titled, *Genders and Decolonization in the Congo*, Karen Bouwer (2010) uses the iconic name of Patrice Lumumba to dissect and interrogate the relationship of decolonisation

and the gender question where contribution of women in the struggle often goes unnoticed or simply ignored due to gender biases. Bouwer (2010: 4) reminds us that Malcolm X once referred to Patrice Lumumba as “the greatest black man who ever walked the African continent”, to outline the importance of Lumumba’s legacy and memory in the minds of ordinary Congolese people and Africans at large. Following from Sankara’s philosophical analysis of the gender question in Africa, perhaps it is useful to ask; who is the greatest woman to ever walk the African continent? It is important that we ask this question in light of the saying that ‘behind every successful man is a strong woman’ and because women voices are often suffocated and their role in history downplayed or not celebrated enough.

One of the common threads between Sankara and Lumumba is that: 1) They were both the youngest Presidents in Africa (at the time) and arguably even in the entire world, 2) they both got assassinated for their ideas (Pan Africanist, patriotism, anti-corruption), 3) they both left an indelible mark in African political history, albeit having been in power for a very short time (Lumumba was less than 6 months in power, Sankara was 4 years in power) and 4), they both advocated for women emancipation against cultural, political and socio-economic marginalisation (when it was unpopular to do so). The last commonality (the fourth one above), is extremely important, because of the gravity and scope of marginalisation that women continue to endure even in modern day Africa.

The following two quotes are arguably some of the most important statements these two giants made, which give the reader a glimpse of their position and stance on issues of women empowerment: Lumumba once said that, “When you civilize a man, you only civilize an individual; but when you civilize a woman, you civilize an entire nation” Bouwer (2010: 13). Almost as if they lived and governed in the same era, Sankara, two decades later, made similar remarks about women and the revolution. He said that, “the revolution and women’s liberation go together. We do not talk of women’s liberation as an act of charity or because of a surge of human compassion. It is a basic necessity for the triumph of the revolution. Women hold up the other half of the sky” (Sankara, 2016: 288-9). An analysis of the similarities and differences between Thomas Sankara and Patrice Lumumba would be a worthwhile and significant undertaking, considering their footprints in African historiography. However, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this study. A comparative study of these two gigantic leaders is encouraged for future research.

Speaking at an International Women's Day rally on 8 March 1987 in Ouagadougou, Sankara delivered arguably one of his greatest speeches which sought to address women issues in Burkina Faso, Africa and the world at the time, and propose solutions to those problems. From the outset of his much-anticipated speech, Sankara humbly acknowledged that he was not suitably qualified to tell women how to forge their struggle against male marginalisation and patriarchy (Sankara, 1987). This was a clear sign that Sankara did not see himself above women and that he understood the sensitivities that women were faced with. Showing his understanding of the hegemony of colonial language legacy in Burkina Faso, Sankara, in his introductory remarks, conceded and apologised in advance to the women who did not understand French, for his delivery of the speech in French. In his own words, he said, "I hope, too, that our sisters here from Kadiogo province who don't understand French – the foreign language in which I will be giving my speech, will be patient with us as they have always been" (Sankara 2016: 259). As if to make amends for using the colonial oppressor's language in the land of the upright man, Sankara subsequently asked that someone help to translate his speech.

Upon studying this speech and many others, one realises and concludes that Sankara was not just another neo-colonial President; he was a Pan African thought leader who was not myopic in his analysis. Furthermore, he was an intellectual philosopher who took time off his busy schedule before and during his Presidency, to study a wide scope of issues outside of politics and economics. Sankara was self-taught; he did not study formally in Universities. Throughout his International Women's Day speech, Sankara often equates/compares women's subjugation to slavery (Sankara, 1987). This indicates how serious he took women's struggles, and how important their struggles were to him as a person and for his popular democratic revolution.

Sankara's ability to galvanise masses of people (from different ethnic groups) behind his ideas is a rare skill which should be commended. However, it also raises a number of questions. For instance, did his audience, in this women's day rally, grasp some very deep nuances and intellectual analogies and points he was making throughout his speech? This question is prompted by the fact that, as a well-read soldier and politician, he used a lot of Marxist and philosophical terminology such as "dialectical materialism", "proletariats", "bourgeoisies", etc. In tracing the socio-historical roots of women marginalisation in society, he spoke of studies conducted by palaeontologists as follows: "For millennia, from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age, relations between sexes were, in the opinion of the most skilled palaeontologists,

positive and complementary in character...” Sankara (2016: 263-264). Sankara was indeed a well-read President, way beyond his time.

I would venture to argue that not only was Sankara an intellectual and a philosopher, but he was also a poet and master teacher. Below are some of his poetic use of words to describe and paint a vivid picture of some the excruciating pain and challenges that women endure to keep families and society functional:

Women –source of life, yet object;
Mother, yet servile domestic;
Nurturer, yet trophy;
Exploited in the fields and at home;
Yet playing a role of a faceless, voiceless extra;
The pivot, the link, yet in chains;
Female shadow of the male shadow...
Women, our sisters and wives, pay for having created life (ibid: 276-277).

Solutions orientated and concerned about the plight of women and all oppressed people are some of the characteristics that define who Thomas Sankara was. In his quest to provide a way forward and potential solutions to some of the issues that haunted women and kept them in chains at the time, Sankara (ibid: 282) cautioned those in attendance, mostly women, that “emancipation, like freedom, is not granted, it is conquered. It is for women themselves to put forward their demands and mobilise to win them”. Beyond decrees that Sankara’s government made in the protection of women’s rights, he also urged women to play a more meaningful role in the economy of their country at a time when the National Council of the Revolution (NCR) was rebuilding Burkina Faso, beginning with changing men’s mindsets towards women. Some of the practices that sought to demean women and deny them fruits of the August Revolution were prostitution, vagrancy and female juvenile delinquency, forced marriages, female circumcision, ostracising unmarried women and difficult living conditions that women faced due to the biased structural design of the society they lived in (ibid: 284).

Some of the interventions by the Sankara government that were geared towards removing some of the structural problems that kept the oppressive infrastructure alive are; installation of water mills in villages, introduction and popularisation of improved cook-stoves, introducing and expanding child care centres, embarking on periodic vaccinations for children, and encouraging

healthy balanced diet at homes (this was feasible because Burkina Faso had in the space of four years achieved food self-sufficiency) (ibid; Harsch, 2015).

Self-imposed cost-cutting measures undertaken by Sankara

Most post-independence African countries' governments have been living beyond their means by spending money they do not have and borrowing billions of dollars from private financiers and the World Bank. Coupled with the colonial debt which most countries inherited at independence and continue to pay to this day, the African debt crisis still haunts almost all African countries. Sankara, having realised that debt was and is, essentially, slavery of a different kind, decided that Burkina Faso would embark on an internally generated capacity for development without having to borrow money and technical assistance from the West. These self-imposed austerity measures meant that foreign aid and other forms of external assistance would drastically shrink and the only option the Burkina Faso government had was to use its own meagre resources much more sparingly and strategically.

Amongst many sweeping and radical changes he made after assuming power in August 1983, Sankara “sold off the government fleet of Mercedes cars and made the Renault 5 (the cheapest car sold in Burkina Faso at that time) the official service car of the ministers” (Akugizibwe, 2018). One of his ministers at the time (Ernest Ouedraogo – Minister for Security) also revealed that Sankara initially wanted ministers to share one car (Renault 5), but after much persuasion and reasoning with him, they were able to convince him that one car for two ministers would be an untenable situation, so he finally agreed that each minister be allocated one car (Faces of Africa Documentary, 2016). As another measure of saving the limited financial resources that government had, it was forbidden for government officials to fly business class/first class when they attended government meetings in other countries. He rationalised this by asserting that whether one was in the first or second class of the airplane, when it took off, it took off at the same time with everyone, and when it landed it landed at the same time regardless of the class of the passengers (ibid). Sankara also reduced salaries of all civil servants, and in doing this, he led by example by also reducing his own salary to \$450 per month, making him one of the least paid Presidents in Africa and the world at that time. Government chauffeurs were also forbidden, which meant that ministers had to drive themselves to work. In addition to this, he compelled civil servant to forego one month's salary for public projects as this would add much

needed resources to the country's fiscus (Ernest Ouédraogo, cited in Facts About Africa Documentary, 2017).

One of the creative and visionary ways in which Sankara helped his government save money and avoid unnecessary spending was to command soldiers to be intimately involved with the people's daily struggles by helping them with development projects. This thinking is best encapsulated in one of Sankara's most widely known quotes where he insisted that "without a patriotic political formation, it is customary to say, a soldier is only a potential criminal" (Sankara, 1988: 172). Because Burkina Faso was (and still is) a predominantly agrarian country where most people (80%) survive on subsistence farming (Lavoie, 2008), Sankara would dispatch some soldiers to help communities in villages with farming and in digging of wells so that they could irrigate their crops. Zeilig (2016: 7) reveals that, "almost 92% of the labour force in 2014 [was] employed in agricultural labour, in subsistence farming and cotton cultivation – statistics largely unchanged since Thomas Sankara's radical experiments at pro-poor development in the early 1980s". The Food and Agricultural Organisation (2014) found that 30% of the GDP of Burkina Faso was from the agricultural sector in 2012, which shows that Burkina Faso still depended on agricultural products even 25 years after Sankara's death. Recent statistics, however, highlight that gold has since 2009 overtaken cotton as Burkina Faso's most exported product with the most foreign earnings (Zeilig, 2016).

Idleness of soldiers and what he termed "budgetary army" did not make sense to him and this is why even before he was a high-ranking soldier and before his Presidency, Sankara was already involved in conscientising his platoons (Bouamama, 2014). Introduction of People's Revolutionary Courts in his efforts to clamp down on corruption and to recover embezzled state resources by the previous administrations was another way in which self-imposed austerity could be sustained so that an endogenous development model could be enforced (Harsch, 2013). Even before he took power in August 1983, Sankara had been consistent in his abhorrence of self-enrichment using state resources. He did not live a lavish life-style like most of the public servants in Burkina Faso. Bouamama (2014) mentions that soon after his appointment as Minister of Information in 1981 by the previous regime, he would often attend Council of Ministers meetings riding a bike and this made him stand out and be appreciated more by Burkinabe people. This goes to show that modest living for him as a person was not a

new phenomenon and he adopted the same approach in his government so as to save tax payers' money and to avoid dependency on the global loan sharks such as the IMF and World Bank.

Endogenous development required great sacrifice from all stakeholders in Burkina Faso and Sankara and his government sought to provide such leadership that would gain the masses confidence by spending modestly, but above all, adopting a pro- poor development strategy. Nzongola-Ntalaja's (2012:41) analysis of development paralysis in Africa is quite instructing:

Whatever the nature of the regime, development remained elusive because of the lack of an autonomous strategy of development by African states. Instead of pursuing the pan-African project of development through self-determination, self-reliance, and pan-African solidarity, African countries implemented development strategies proposed by Western countries and the international financial institutions under their control, namely, the World Bank and the IMF.

Without a doubt, Sankara went against the grain, as, unlike many of his predecessors and colleagues at the time, he did exactly what Professor Nzongola-Ntalaja proposes here, by choosing the path of democratic popular revolution, that is, autonomous and endogenous development strategy. He was disillusioned about the so-called aid to Africa by the same Bretton Woods institutions controlled by previous colonial masters of Africa. He knew that there were, often than not, vested interests and ulterior motives behind foreign aid, hence his often-repeated statement that, the one who feeds you, controls you and that if a person or an institution does not feed you, they can demand nothing of you in return (Sankara, 1988). Put simply and differently, his central argument here was that there is never 'free lunch'. Sankara did not want Burkinabes to have a beggar mentality and this was clear in his diplomatic engagements with France specifically. New African Magazine (2012) captures this view succinctly;

In one of his first actions as President, he asked development partners to strike out the reference to 'foreign aid', and instead refer to it as "mutual assistance", arguing that if Burkina Faso was unable to make financial gifts to France, the Burkinabé immigrants who sweep the streets of Paris every day for meagre wages should be considered as a form of reciprocal compensation from Africans.

Production and consumption of Burkinabe products was another move to inculcate a homegrown market and job creation development approach without being at the mercy of

Foreign Direct Investment. In an effort to boost local production in agriculture and in the textile industry, Sankara made it a policy, albeit unwritten, that all public servants would on certain days wear clothes wholly manufactured in Burkina Faso. Therefore, civil servants were obliged to wear *faso dan fani*, common clothing made from local cotton (Bouamama, 2014). This initiative, which seemed too drastic to some (i.e., neoliberals and elitist civil servants), and a small step to others (i.e., radical Marxists within NCR and its far left allies), did not only have prospects of adding value to the economy, but most importantly, in the long run, it had a potential of changing Burkinabe mindsets about the importance of self-reliance and taking pride in working for themselves, without having to import everything. Sankara's endogenous and autonomous development approach was not a quick fix strategy to systemic problems; it was instead meant to yield sustainable results in the long term. This was short term sacrifice for long term pleasure, and for this, some in the upper class in society resented him because their lavish lifestyles were tempered with, like the local corporate sector and the French business conglomerates which disproportionately benefited from importation of most products and services into Burkina Faso.

As alluded to above, tremendous achievements in the agriculture sector (which was the bedrock of Burkina Faso's economy) were recorded. Wheat production is said to have risen from 1700kg per hectare to 3800kg per hectare during the four years that Sankara was President, and in the midst of the drought and desertification that was affecting the Sahel region then (New African Magazine, 2012). One of the most important reasons for any country to be able to feed itself without having to import basic food stuffs from other countries is that this consolidates its national security and sovereignty. Therefore, there is a close relationship between food security and national security because if a country cannot feed itself, it leaves itself exposed to be exploited by countries that supply it with food in a practice known as "sticks and carrots" in International Relations. This explains why Sankara was adamant that Burkina Faso had to, in the shortest time possible, achieve food self-sufficiency, because he was an anti-imperialist, so for him to not compromise his Pan African and revolutionary fervour, he had to ensure that he avoided by all means, the dependency syndrome that most African states were suffering from, and continue to do so.

Fiscal responsibility was the driving force behind the self-imposed austerity that Burkina Faso embarked upon in this period (1983-87), and it is this principled example he set over two decades ago that some Kenyans drew upon. Government critics in Kenya in 2003 criticised the

government which had set aside \$12 million for buying luxury cars for ministers, by pleading with them to follow Sankara's example (New African Magazine, 2012), who did not buy luxury cars, but instead sold them and bought the cheapest cars in the country.

Debt, a cleverly organised crime to reconquer Africa

This section is a continuation of the previous section, only that it focuses more on the meaning and impact of debt in the borrowing countries in Africa. At the 25th Seating of the OAU, Sankara made a sterling speech to the heads of state in attendance. Most of his speech was devoted to explaining why Africa could not afford to repay its colonial debt, and to lobbying all African states to act as a unit in their refusal to pay this debt. This was one of the defining moments for Sankara's future as he took the battle to the doorsteps of imperialism, showing them that he was steadfast in fighting neo-imperial forces head on.

In true Sankara style, that of a social scientist and revolutionary philosopher, he traced the roots of African debt to colonialism and its twin accomplices, slavery and imperialism. His arguments, albeit historically and politically nuanced, were essentially based on simple logic that was premised on the notion that most of the debt that African countries incurred was debt taken by their former colonial masters and their "care taker" black puppet governments which the former installed at independence in the 1960s. Therefore, new governments which were genuinely supported by the popular masses had no business repaying debt they did not incur and this was a moral and principled issue which did not need rocket scientist to decipher.

Sankara eloquently put it to the OAU delegates that, "It was colonisers that put Africa into debt to the financiers – their brothers and cousins. This debt has nothing to do with us. That's why we cannot pay it" Sankara (2016: 303)

He went on to elaborate why it was illogical and suicidal to keep paying the colonial debt:

The debt is another form of neo-colonialism, one in which the colonialists have transformed themselves into technical assistants. Actually, it would be more accurate to say technical assassins... The debt in its present form, is a cleverly organised re-conquest of Africa under which our growth and development are regulated by stages and norms totally alien to us. It is a re-conquest that turns each of us into a financial slave – or just a plain slave... (ibid).

It would seem that Sankara pre-empted the massive wave of Structural Adjustments Programmes (SAPs) that swept across the entire African continent in the 1990s at the behest of the World Bank and IMF. These programmes wreaked havoc to most African economies and caused social instability because they forced even the poorest of countries to cut back on their social spending and encouraged them to privatise many state-owned companies and their services. This “development” (or mal-development) approach that was forced upon African countries in exchange for financial assistance (or assassination as Sankara described it) was indeed alien and antagonistic to the peculiar socio-economic issues in Africa. That is why such straight-jacket “fits-all” approaches and policy transfer dismally failed and continued to fail in the African context. A number of African countries, in this period, had substantial GDP growth, which sadly did not translate to development (that is, poverty deepened, inequality widened, and the overall human development index [HDI] declined).

Invoking the Marshal Plan,¹¹ which was an economic stimulus given to Europe by the victors of the Second World War, the USA, Sankara argued that unlike Europe which was assisted to rebuild post the war, Africa was instead asked to pay those who brought war and plunder to it. Such hypocrisy and double standards were deemed unacceptable by Sankara, that is why he strongly urged Africa to act as a united bloc in refusing to pay the colonial debt. Sankara in advancing this argument, coined the term “African Plan” which he argues “enabled Europe to face Hitler’s hordes at a time when their economies were under siege [and] their stability threatened” (ibid: 304). In reference to colonial slavery, and using the fact of history (slavery) from a reparations point of view, Sankara argued that Africans should in fact be the ones seeking that their blood debt be repaid as millions of Africans were barbarically killed during the middle passage as they were transported to Europe and the Americas during slavery. He explained that the same countries (former colonisers) that want Africa to pay its debts are the same countries that owe Africa “a debt of blood” which he contends, “the greatest riches can never repay” (ibid: 204).

In a prophetic manner, Sankara concluded his speech to the OAU in July 1987 by predicting that if African states did not adopt a unanimous position on the debt crisis, by refusing to pay it as a bloc, individual countries that took that stance alone would be isolated and economically

¹¹ After World War II, the USA financed the reconstruction of Europe and its rearmament post the destruction during the two wars. These rebuilding efforts began soon after 1948 as America had emerged as a superpower and had the financial muscle to help its European allies.

“castrated”. In his own words, perhaps prophetic or because he had an in depth understanding of how imperial powers operated, he said, “to our going off to be killed one at a time[,] if Burkina Faso alone were to refuse to pay the debt, I wouldn’t be at the next conference” (ibid: 306). Indeed, on the fateful day of 15 October the same year (1987), Sankara’s life was prematurely taken, and even though the trigger was pulled by soldiers of his own country, they were acting on instructions from France, the former coloniser of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), and Libyan and Liberian leaders are also fingered to have been among those who plotted his death along with the US (Murrey, 2017).

It would seem that Sankara knew that his fate was just around the corner, as he predicted, over thirty years ago, the same victimisation of countries/leaders that stand up against imperialism. Zimbabwe is a case in point; then President Mugabe had adopted the same stance as Sankara on fighting imperialism before sanctions were imposed on his country and he was ultimately deposed, (even though his indigenisation programme was riddled with many inconsistencies and controversies). In his case, this was sparked by Mugabe’s nationalisation of the land (in the early 2000s) that was stolen by British colonisers in Zimbabwe (see Mamdani, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009).

A decade after the failed SAPs imposed in Africa, there was widespread lobbying that Africa’s precarious development challenges could not be solved unless some of its debt was written off so that it could use its meagre resources to serve its people. Initiatives such as Jubilee Debt Campaign and Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)s were some of the mechanisms through which the debt of some of the mostly indebted poor countries was “forgiven”, albeit with certain stringent conditions (Oloruntoba, 2015). Explaining how debt forgiveness was used as a veil to continue plundering Africa, in essence giving with one hand while taking with the other, Oloruntoba (2015: 1) further gives insights about how the debt crisis was dealt with in Nigeria:

In a country like Nigeria where a whopping \$12 billion was paid to creditors such as Paris and London Clubs in order to have \$18 billion written off, both domestic and foreign debts have started to accumulate again.... The problematic of the debt forgiveness experience in Africa lies in the same logic of accumulation by dispossession, elite conspiracy and complicity as well as the fallacy of economics that informed the accumulation of the debts.

In part, the debt crisis that faces Africa today was precipitated by the ill-advice of the Washington Consensus¹² which was enforced by the IMF and World Bank by attaching unrealistic conditions to bad loans they were offering already debt-ridden countries. This neo-liberal and pro-capital intervention was based on market fundamentalism which dictates that the market will, through its invisible hand, regulate the price of goods and services, therefore the role of the state should be rolled back (Gilpin, 2001). Ultimately, the so-called debt relief and fiscal support in Africa by the West and its deadly twin institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, was just a manoeuvre to reconquer Africa for another century of financial enslavement.

With key countries like Ghana having a budget deficit estimated at \$1.6 billion which is about 10% of their GDP, and their debt-to-GDP ratio at 72.4%, this is a rather gloomy economic situation for Africa's first independent state (Dzimwasha, 2017). Ghana is not alone in the surging debt deficit. It is joined by two continental economic power houses, Nigeria and Egypt. In November 2016, Egypt is reported to have borrowed \$12 billion from the IMF while Nigeria is in the process of securing a \$7 billion loan from the World Bank and China (Dzimwasha, 2017). If anything, the rising debt in contemporary African states is reminiscent of the 1980s and 1990s debt crisis and it seems Africa has not learned from that crisis and from Sankara's stern caution and resistance to debt that holds countries captive and their economies stagnant or in recession. Like a drug addict, it seems Africa is addicted to debt. This is why lessons from Sankara's regime on how it dealt with debt and foreign aid remain important and relevant to this day.

Burkina Faso's currency blind-spot: CFA franc pegging to the French franc

CFA (Colonies Francaises d'Afrique) is a French acronym for African Financial Community, which is essentially two currencies used in West Africa guaranteed by the French Treasury. African Business (2012) posits that fourteen countries in West Africa and Central Africa use this currency, and that twelve of them are former colonies of France. Burkina Faso, even during Sankara's era, continued using the CFA franc. I argue that this might have been one of the blind spots of Sankara's regime because for such a revolutionary regime which was dedicated to

¹² This refers to economic policy prescripts that were advocated for to the developing world by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These are a set of neo-liberal market-based economic policies which were deemed the "standard" for reforms in debt-ridden under-developed countries of the Global South.

fighting neo-imperialism in all its forms, to have left its monetary policy to be dictated by France, was a huge blunder.

However, it would seem that Sankara was consciously not ready to leave the CFA zone, according to his former Minister of Finance, Damo Justin Baro. In an interview with L'Observateur, a Burkina Faso media agency when asked about the rumour that used to do the rounds in the early years of the revolution that Sankara wanted to leave the CFA zone for a national currency, Baro remarked thus:

Yes, the rumour actually ran that Burkina was going to coin money. This affirmation was reinforced by the many changes made in 1984 to the first anniversary of the revolution: the name of the country, the flag, the national anthem, the names of the main rivers of the country, the names of the administrative districts, the configuration of military stripes, etc. In this momentum, everyone thought he would not forget money, the most obvious sign of sovereignty' (Baro, 2019).

This was certainly one of the obvious changes that many of his sympathisers thought he would quickly make but he did not, perhaps because his hands were tight and he tried at all times to be pragmatic even in his radical decisions that were often made and implemented in haste. Damo Justin Baro vividly recalls Sankara's response when he (as the Finance Minister at the time) asked him what they were to do on the currency: "We will not make the decision to leave the CFA in favour of a national currency. Our partners in the CFA would be so happy to see us act exactly as they planned...", Sankara is said to have responded. "Give me control of a nation's currency, I care not who makes its laws" are words that are said to have been uttered by Mayer Rothschild who controls most countries' reserve banks in the world, indicating how strategically significant control of a country's currency is. To his credit, perhaps Sankara was not quick to change the currency of Burkina Faso like he did its former name because he may have understood that such a decision would have had devastating results for their already ailing economy which was still dependent on remittances and income from its citizens who worked in the nearby wealthier countries like Ivory Coast and Ghana. Changing of currency would have required other countries in West African to join hands with Burkina Faso for it to be a success.

Linked to the notion of neo-imperial currency bondage in the form of CFA francs that Sankara's administration continued using, is the regime's ambitious Popular Development

Programme (PDP). 80% of this programme's funding would be sourced outside Burkina Faso, meaning that only 20% of the finances would be sourced internally (Martin, 1987). This was by far one of the major contradictions of Sankara's revolutionary government because, on the one hand, they had set out to be wholly politically independent and economically self-sufficient, and on the other, they drafted a 15-month development plan (PDP) that sought a significant amount of funding abroad. Perhaps one of the explanations could be that their hands were financially tied due to their use of the CFA franc that was pegged with the French currency, making it difficult for them to determine their own monetary and fiscal policy which would help them generate more income internally in a short period of time. Alternatively, it could be that it was a conscious effort to show the world that Burkina Faso was not necessarily a closed economy or a pariah state, it could still welcome FDI, but such investment or aid would have to be just the means to the ends, the ends being to generate enough internal economy capacity so that they would not seek more aid in the future.

Aware of the external constraints and contradictions of Sankara's government due to the economic dependency syndrome that plagues almost all African countries, Martin (1987: 83), as early as the same year Sankara was assassinated, argued that;

It should be pointed out that Burkina has a limited degree of autonomy in its credit and development financing policies due to the fact that it belongs to the Franc zone system. In this regard, the creation of UREBA (Revolutionary Banking Union) in July 1984 should not significantly reduce the dependency and remedy the inadequacies of the Burkina banking system.

It would seem that Sankara was aware of the complexities and constraints of belonging to the Franc zone system even post political independence, hence the creation of a state-owned banking union just a year after the 1983 August revolution. So, the question that remains unanswered is why, if he was aware of the dangers of using CFA francs, did he choose to remain in this Franc zone system? One of the clues could perhaps be found in the assertion by Martin (1986: 215) when he advances the argument that "while the monetary cooperation agreements do provide for the possible modification of the CFA F/FF exchange rate, the French government has clearly cautioned the African states on the serious economic and political consequences of severing the monetary 'umbilical cord' which links them to France." I would conclude, then, that at the time, Sankara's hands were tied in terms of his fiscal and monetary policy, due to this bullying tactic by the French Treasury, for Burkina Faso to have within that shot space of time, pulled out of the Franc zone individually.

Radical reconfiguration of society and the economy in Burkina Faso at the time, was given an ideological underpinning by the National Council for the Revolution (NCR, or CNR – its French acronym). NCR defined this concept as;

Establishing of an independent, self-sufficient and planned economy. This entails a radical socio-economic transformation, including a transformation of the structures of production and distribution, and comprehensive reforms in the areas of agriculture (land reform), administration, education, and social services (Martin, 1987: 79).

In my view, radical economic transformation should have also entailed cutting the CFA franc currency neo-colonial umbilical cord that continues to bind and hold hostage former French colonies. Without West African and Central African countries breaking free from this currency shackles that keep them in perpetual servitude to France's political and economic interests, the countries that continue to use this currency cannot genuinely claim to be free from French imperial clutches. Theirs will be a master-slave relationship with France, because no self-respecting and truly sovereign country can let another country control its central bank, thereby dictating to it how it should run its monetary and fiscal policy. It is important to note that about 65% of the currency and foreign reserves of the 14 aforementioned countries is held in France's Treasury Operations Account (African Business, 2012). There is a growing voice in South Africa and a few other African countries like Zimbabwe on "radical economic transformation" and in the midst of the rhetoric on this concept, its actual (or contextual) meaning is lost. Therefore, many African countries can take a leaf about its meaning and practice from Burkina Faso under Thomas Sankara's leadership.

Despite the argument advanced by some proponents of the Franc zone, which is that this zone helps the Francophone countries and other members of this zone to have monetary and financial stability, economies of these countries have been in shambles. Renou (2002: 11) is of the view that the Franc zone has done more harm than good in Africa because;

The purpose of the zone was to preserve monetary stability in the region. But it also enables France to control Francophone African countries' money supply, their monetary and financial regulations, their banking activities, their credit allocation and ultimately, their budgetary and economic policies [...]. In addition, the convertibility of CFA francs into French francs facilitates corruption and illegal diversion of public aid between French and African intermediaries.

Martin (1995b) shares the same sentiments with Renou as he contends that the fact that CFA franc is tied to French currency implies that France continues to exercise “a quasi-veto-right in the decision-making process of African Central Banks”. It is this implicit control of the economic and political fate of “independent” African states that prompts me to argue that in the case of Burkina Faso, one of the things that Sankara ought to have done in conjunction with changing the name of his country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, could have been to change the currency and to sever the parasitic CFA franc ties with France. However, it should be noted that the markets would have reacted badly to such a bold move, so perhaps Sankara did not want such a shock effect in his new administration.

Critique of Sankara and his Developmental Pursuits

A closer reflection and discussion of Sankara’s mistakes is important because, like all leaders and human beings as a whole, mistakes are always committed since no one is perfect. Acknowledging and laying bare these mishaps and blind spots is useful for this study as it can only enhance our understanding of Sankara and his August revolution, so that such pitfalls can perhaps be avoided by future leaders. Explaining why Sankara believed so much in the politicisation (or what he would prefer to call “conscientisation”) of the military and their heavy involvement in developmental objectives of the state, his time in Madagascar for officer training is a useful starting point. Sankara attended Antsirabe Military Academy in Madagascar, which was at the time considered to be one of the finest military academies in Africa. Harsch (2014: 27-28) explains that at this academy;

...the range of instruction went beyond standard military subjects. Sankara was particularly drawn to courses on agriculture, including how to raise crop yields and better the lives of farmers – themes he would later take up in his own country. Madagascar’s army was innovative in another respect: it had not only combat personnel but also members of public service units – the ‘green berets’ – who focused primarily on development activities. Sankara was so impressed that he asked for a year’s extension in Madagascar to work with the units.

This account paints a clear picture of why Sankara would later during their own revolution in Burkina Faso, place a lot of emphasis on the importance of a well-rounded soldier who did not

just take orders but was able to think for him/herself and see themselves as an intrinsic part of society. Some of his government's top-down approach to development may have been because he saw the army as the "saviours" of society against those they perceived as the "enemies of the people". It could be that his authoritarian tactics may have been influenced by his strong military background.

Some scholars such as Kongo and Zeilig (2017) question why it is that after the seizure of power in August 1983, Sankara and his administration were at pains to explain the necessity of launching a coup. Yet, two months later, the coup was now dubbed as a Revolution. They ask, "so what grounds did Sankara have for declaring his military takeover as a revolution?" (ibid: 43). This is a critical question. However, one might ask if naming it a revolution or coup changes the fundamental fact that it was a radical break from the previous neo-colonial governments in Burkina Faso since its independence, and that his NCR government actually changed the lives of ordinary Burkinabe (albeit modestly and for a short period) who had been deprived of basic services before. Among those interventions that were short lived and lasted only for a short period of time, are food self-sufficiency status of Burkina Faso; a healthy budget with surplus instead of deficit; revolutionary fervour and posture of the government and its anti-imperial rhetoric. All these almost vanished or were rolled back as soon as Sankara had been deposed in a bloody assassination in October 1987.

The logical question that follows, therefore is why was there a "rectification of the revolution", as Blaise Compaore expressed. In essence, part of the reason why Sankara had to be killed and a regime change was instigated and implemented in the manner in was, was because Burkina Faso and Sankara were a "bad" example to the rest of its neighbouring countries, West Africa, Africa, and the Third World at large in that it had shown that it was possible to be a truly independent country beyond symbolic flag independence. Therefore, they had to be stopped by all means possible, lest other Francophone countries in West Africa learned and got inspired by the Burkina Faso revolution and had the gut to stand up against the French neo-colonial exploitation. Because of the Compaore's government reverting back to the neoliberal economic model that relied on foreign capital and loans for its domestic affairs, food security and sovereignty were no longer a priority because agriculture of food crops was no longer the bedrock of the government's industrial policy. Because of extensive borrowing from international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, and of course from France,

Burkina Faso quickly moved from having a budget surplus under Sankara to a massive budget deficit under the new pro-capital administration of Compaore.

Lastly, it goes without saying again that the hand that feeds you (lends you money) is the hand that wields its will upon you. That is why Comapore's government could not have a strong principled position against imperialism and neo-colonisers such as France because they were now in bed with French leadership for their vested interests in Burkina, and so it was business as usual again with the "master-slave" relationship between France and Burkina Faso. Strong work ethic of Burkinabe; penetration of primary health care facilities in many parts of the country, rural and urban; Some infrastructure such as stadia, community halls, rail ways etc are some of the interventions that survived for a longer period in Burkina even after Sankara's assassination.

As already alluded to, Sankara's government's handling of land and agrarian reforms was one of his gravest mistakes that negatively affected the revolution and the work of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs). Martens (1989), who is one of the radical Belgian writers who spent a lot of time in Burkina Faso during the revolution, is of the view that the side-lining and disregard of the powers that chiefs, especially Mossi chiefs, wield in Burkina Faso was "the number one danger of the revolution". This is indeed true as not many scholars who write on Sankara and Burkina Faso would dispute this. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the NCR government later attempted to correct this mistake, but it was too late as Sankara was killed before they could execute this correction.

The CDRs, although established with the intention of being the building blocks of the revolution and as a form of local government where society could directly participate in their own governance, they quickly degenerated to instruments of looting and embezzlement. In essence, CDRs were meant to be conveyer belts between the central government led by the NCR and the people in all sectors of society. The fact that most of these CDRs were led by young unemployed people who sympathised with the revolution meant that they later became hard to control and reign in when they faltered. That is why "on 4 April 1986, Sankara was forced to denounce the abuses of the CDRs and acknowledge that they had been used for looting and embezzlement" (Kongo and Zeilig, 2017: 50).

The fact that the institutions of traditional leadership and organised union movements were main pillars of society that wielded the most power to the extent that previous administration since Burkina independence were either deposed due to their pressures or emboldened due to these institutions shows how powerful they are in Burkina society and had to be engaged very cautiously. Tyler Dickovick (2009: 524) terms these two institutions “institutional kingmakers” in Burkina society, prior to Sankara’s ascendancy to power and even during his Presidency. Thomas Sankara, however, did not seem to appreciate this and committed suicide-like mistakes by side-lining both traditional leaders and taking a strong-handed position towards trade unions. This would later weaken his governments support in rural areas and semi-rural areas where traditional leaders commanded a lot of respect and power from society. The same fate would later befall his government because of the tensions he had with leaders of unions in urban areas and cities such as Ouagadougou. Dickovick (2009: 524) reiterates this point more cogently thus, “Sankara’s decision to alienate these chiefs would eliminate the basis for rural support, the ‘ballast’ so essential to African regimes.”

The tug-of-war that continued for quite some time between Sankara’s government and the unions only did serious harm to the longevity and sustainability of the revolution because of the failure to systematically consolidate popular support, especially among the urban centres-based union movements. Not only was the NCR administration steadily becoming marginalised in the trade union movements, but they also found themselves isolated from the broader left-wing political parties which were initially their major supporters and colleagues in government. This was exacerbated by the fact that Sankara personally did not believe in political parties as institutions (Harsch, 2014). Around late 1986 to mid-1987, Kongo and Zeilig, (2017:52) argue, “increasingly Sankara was alone – without even direct military command”, and even his political authority had drastically weakened in this period. As it is often argued by Sankara’s detractors, the fact that after his assassination there was no widespread popular rebellion against Compaore and those who initiated the coup implies that Sankara’s government was extremely isolated and had lost significant popularity and support, especially from trade unions who have a rich and long history of fighting back and toppling authoritarian regimes in Burkina (Chouli, 2012; Kongo and Zeilig, 2017).

The paradox, Kongo and Zeilig, (2017: 54) observed, was that,

Sankara had stripped himself of the ability to defend the transformation he had attempted to implement. This tragedy of isolation speaks to the earlier failure. Sankara

had tried to substitute his popularity, his great charisma and his oratory for a real movement that could practically confront the internal and external forces working towards his defeat.

In addition, his impatience, haste, and unchecked anti-imperialism rhetoric, meant that he, exposed to his internal and external enemies, what his potential next move would be, making his foreign policy easily predictable to those who had vested interests in the status-quo and plundering of resources in Burkina Faso.

Sankara's Leadership

By far one of the shining examples of disciplined, ethical, visionary and uncompromising African political leaders, Sankara is arguably yet to be matched by any political leader in Africa. His leadership qualities can be traced as far back as his teenage years when he forcefully rode a bicycle of a white child during colonial years in Burkina Faso, which was unheard of at the time (Murrey, 2015; Sankara, 2016). In his own words describing what it was like growing up in such an unequal country where black kids would just dream of merely owning or just riding a bicycle, Sankara said;

The other children dreamed about this bicycle for months and months. We woke up thinking about it; we drew pictures of it; we tried to suppress the longing that kept welling up inside of us. We did just about everything to try to convince them to lend it to us. If the principal's children wanted sand to build sand castles, we brought them sand...One day, I realized all of our efforts were in vain. I grabbed the bike and said to myself, 'Too bad, I'm going to treat myself to this pleasure no matter what the consequences (Murrey, 2015: 2).

Inequalities in Burkina Faso were glaringly obvious to Sankara at an early age and it is this early consciousness of the appalling living conditions of black people in Burkina Faso that ignited his curiosity about white oppression and domination in Africa and the world over. It was apparent for Sankara at that early age that human dignity was reserved for some and not others in his country. It was something that did not sit well with him which he at a later stage fiercely fought against.

Skinner (1988) described Sankara as a charismatic young leader who went against the grain in all he did. Being from a small mineral deficient country that is landlocked, Sankara was a Pan Africanist at heart because he did not see the world in geographical terms only; he understood that super powers in the West would always try to impose their will on smaller countries in the

Global South that did not have the economic muscle in global affairs and geopolitics. Hence, his unwavering assault at imperial powers and global white supremacy. In addition, Sankara was said to be a “handsome, dashing, personable, very much ‘on stage’ and sincere” person. This further explains why he was described as a charismatic and innately gifted leader (ibid: 438). Charisma is defined in a political context as “a special quality of leadership that captures popular imagination and inspires unwavering allegiance, confidence, and devotion” (ibid: 437).

In dissecting Sankara’s leadership qualities, which he self-sacrificially used to serve his people with distinction, rigour, and utmost honour, the following traits can be said to best describe the person and leader that he was:

1. RARE (**R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, **R**elevant, **E**thical) leadership,
2. Transformational leader,
3. Anti-personality cult leader,
4. A product of (and beyond) his time and context,
5. A thought leader of note (intellectual and philosopher),
6. A Revolutionary Pan-African Nationalist

RARE Leadership

Ngambi’s (2011) book, aptly titled, *RARE Total Leadership: Leading with the Head, Heart, and Hands*, gives a conceptualisation of what RARE leadership connotes and entails. He makes a case that this is the type of leadership that is underpinned by a principled, value-based system of thought and action. Responsibility, Accountability, Relevance, and Ethics are therefore the primary building blocks that inform and propel RARE Total Leadership. In addition, this leadership approach comprises five key dimensions, and these are: being a visionary; being a change agent; ensuring and inculcating connectivity; being thoroughly engaging; and integrity in all one does (ibid).

Leaders of Sankara’s calibre are extremely rare, if any, in contemporary Africa. Indicative of his responsibility and accountability to the Burkinabe, he once said, “I consider myself as someone who has a duty to respect the wishes and the demands of the people. I will do as I am told by the people” (Martin, 1987: 78). The relevance of Sankara’s leadership and his regime can best be seen in the policies and programmes which he passed, key among them the reduction and scrapping of rentals for poor people. His ethics and principles are embodied by

all he did to clamp down on corrupt officials both in his administration and in the previous regimes' administrations. This is evidenced by his establishment of the People's Revolutionary Courts which tried and prosecuted offenders in full view of the public.

Transformational leadership

Ngambi (2010a) views leadership as “the process of influencing others commitment towards realizing their full potential in achieving value adding shared vision with passion and integrity”. This definition of leadership is quite encompassing, therefore transformational leaders are also preoccupied with changing the lives of people from a certain undesirable condition to a better reality for them, with them, at their behest. Francis (2014: 123), in his detailed review of Robert Rotberg's book titled, *Transformative Political Leadership: Making a Difference in the Developing World*, defines Transformative Political Leadership as a type of leadership that;

...explores the moral and ethical dimensions of political leadership in the developing world, which represents a significant departure from the *transitionalist* corporate model of leadership that parochially focuses on the educatedness, ideological commitment and managerial efficiency.

Sankara was more than just a transformational leader; he was rather a revolutionary Pan-Africanist leader (see below on this type leader).

Anti-personality cult leader

Totally opposed to his image being turned into that of a demi-god, Sankara refused that his portraits should be placed in public spaces and government buildings because he did not want to “privatise” the revolution. This was an attempt to make ordinary people own their own struggles and destiny so that they do not leave it into an individual's hands, be it a President of a country or not. This perverted normalisation of iconography in the form of Presidents' faces being paraded everywhere is the anti-thesis to Sankarism. He did not want to be elevated to a hero or deity status as most African Presidents prefer (Leshoele, 2017; Murrey, 2018). It is this level of humility and servant orientation that sets Sankara apart from other statesmen in the world. He was a true servant of the people, who did not want any credit for doing what he deemed to be what he was supposed to be doing. Indeed, he was not fond of hagiography about his personal or political life because he saw himself as a normal Burkinabe citizen who was

just doing the little that he could to help his fellow Burkinabe and humanity to achieve their full potential and to lead dignified and fulfilling lives free of basic needs (Leshoele, 2017).

Sankara: A product of (and beyond) his time and context

What would make Sankara such a gifted and visionary man that would compel many people that follow his work and study him to make such an assertion that his mental age was older than that of his peers? (Leshoele, 2017). There are many reasons, key amongst them are the following; he was a subtle “feminist”, an environmentalist; he dared to achieve food self-sufficiency (as he is famously known for; he indeed “dared to invent the future”), and lastly, he was not afraid to hold the bull by the horns (he spoke truth to power – by often condemning France and other imperial powers with remarkable zeal) (McFadden, 2018).

Another significant instance that showed how meticulous and intelligent Sankara was compared to many of his peers is how he responded to an interview question asked by a Swiss journalist, Jean-Philippe Rapp in 1985, if he did not fear that his country would struggle if imperial powers sanctioned them economically like withdrawing their aid. He answered in this startling manner: “From imperialism’s point of view, it’s more important to dominate us culturally than militarily. Cultural domination is more flexible, more effective, less costly. This is why we say that to overturn the Burkinabe regime you don’t need to bring in heavily armed mercenaries” (Sankara, 2016: 162). This response shows that Sankara fully understood the significance of soft power through cultural imperialism, which would explain why he was emphatic about the importance of development of the arts and ensuring that Africans used their own languages, totems and customs in educational settings and in business. All successful countries like Japan, China, Germany, Russia and most Scandinavian countries are adamant on the use of their culture in education and in economic industries technology development because they all appreciate the fact that language is a carrier of culture and memory that links our ancestors with the current people and those that are yet to be born.

A thought leader of note (intellectual and philosopher)

It is important to contextualise our understanding of what a thought leader is so that it would make the explanation of why Sankara is a such a leader easier. Gumede’s work on the interplay

of thought leadership, thought liberation, and critical consciousness describes the kind of leader that Africa yearns for, and Sankara embodied all these qualities. According to Gumede (2015: 93), thought leadership;

Connotes a leadership orientation underpinned by unconventional ideology, historically nuanced, culturally sensitive and contextually grounded. Thought leadership – far from and more critical than other forms of leadership – has to be about leadership that is based on progressive ideologies, beliefs, orientations with significant pragmatic and impact appeal.

Sankara was a self-made and self-taught intellectual who loved books and reading and when asked questions by the media, he was always ready to reply on his feet by often giving analogies and comparisons. When asked what and where imperialism was, he simply retorted, “Where is imperialism? Look at your plates when you eat. These imported grains of rice, corn, and millet - that is imperialism, let’s look no further” (Sankara, 1987)¹³. Unlike most intellectuals and orthodox philosophers who are often only preoccupied with theory and intellectual engagement, Sankara, much like Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, and Steve Biko, was not infatuated with ideas and books alone; he found a balance between theory and praxis. Elucidating further this point, Martin (1987: 79) opines;

Both thinker and doer, Thomas Sankara is not content with just enunciating a comprehensive and coherent political doctrine; he also tries, with various degrees of success, to put his thoughts into practices. To that extent, he observes one of the supreme principles of Marxism-Leninism, unity of theory and praxis ...this reminds us of Marx’s celebrated dictum: ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point, however, is to change it.’

Sankara, a self-proclaimed Marxist “student” himself, clearly did not take for granted the lessons he gained from studying Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin because he put into practice (albeit without a wholesale approach) many socialist programmes for the benefit of the downtrodden proletariats in Burkina Faso. As Afanasyev (1980: 155) postulates, “Theory without practice is pointless, practice without theory is blind. Theory indicates the way and helps to find the most efficient means of achieving practical objectives”. These are some of the principles that guided Sankara to better navigate the murky terrain between being a thought leader and a thought doer.

¹³ Sankara said this in a documentary. See the reference list for details.

When the fathers and mothers of Pan-Africanism are mentioned in literature and elsewhere, it is very rare that Sankara's name would be in that list, even though I am of the view that he is among those who contributed the most to this noble ideal. His self-less contribution to revolutionary and Nationalist Pan Africanism was practical, much like the Pan Africanism of Marcus Garvey because he used the state apparatus to implement key fundamentals of Pan Africanism, chief among them being that Africans from all walks of life must, as a precondition for the total liberation, work together as a unit. That is why he lobbied African heads of states to collectively refuse paying colonial debt; that is why he condemned Francois Mitterand, the then French President, for allowing PW Botha, the Apartheid President, to visit France; that is why he visited Harlem (a ghetto in the USA) and proclaimed during his speech there that his white house is in Black Harlem; that is why he also declared Nelson Mandela and Winnie Madikizela Mandela as first citizens of Burkina Faso during Apartheid. He was a formidable Pan Africanist. The following words by Sankara show that he was a Pan-African thinker who was not myopic in his analysis of issues; "We must understand how the struggle of Burkinabe women today is part of the world wide struggle of all women and, beyond that, part of the struggle for the full rehabilitation of our continent" (Sankara, 2016: 262).

Post Sankara era – "Rectification of the Revolution"

Almost immediately after the assassination of Sankara, Blaise Compaore announced that he would take the reins of political power as President of Burkina Faso to try and steer the country back to its revolutionary path from which Sankara had "divorced" it. He then sought to reverse major programmes and gains of the August revolution by re-joining many of the international organisations that Sankara had distanced his government from. The nationalisation program was also reversed and, in its place, a robust privatisation plan was rolled out. One of the clear signs that showed that Compaore had somersaulted on their dress code and "tradition" of wearing the military camouflage was when he began wearing expensive French suits and having an expensive taste for material things like cars, houses, etc. (Wilkins, 1989).

There has been a lot of speculation and suspicion about the role (if any) of the Libyan leader, Muammar Qaddafi, on the assassination of Sankara in 1987. Sankara and Qaddafi were known

to be quite close because of their determined fight against imperialism, but Sankara did not want to wholesomely copy and paste the Libyan revolution and governance, and this ideological independence is said to have not sat well with Qadaffi. What heightened these suspicions that Qadaffi may have had a hand in Sankara's demise was the fact that Qadaffi gave Compaore an expensive Alpha Romeo vehicle as a gift soon after the assassination of Sankara. It is reported that this embarrassed Compaore a great deal, possibly because he knew that many people knew that Qadaffi was a close "ally" of Sankara and therefore that act would raise suspicions (Wilkins, 1989). Charles Taylor of Liberia has also been pointed at as having possibly contributed to the murder of Sankara. There is a lot of evidence suggesting this, according to Aziz Fall, the coordinator of the International Justice Campaign for Sankara (IJCS) based on the evidence presented to the UN Human Rights Committee (Group for Research and Initiative for the Liberation of Africa, 2007).

Wilkins (1989: 388) adds that;

Sankara might have been able to sustain what little there was of Burkinabe pride and economic independence, which was the essence of his revolution, but it seems hard to imagine Compaore refusing seemingly generous financial hand-outs from the Libyan Colonel in return for military support. It appears that Burkina Faso is once again up for sale.

The role of traditional leadership, powers and privileges they enjoyed in regimes prior to that of Sankara such as ownership of land and taxing peasants for land use, having access to free electricity and other public amenities, were restored to them by Compaore as part of "rectifying" the revolution. His predecessor, Sankara, had isolated traditional elites by denying them all these privileges, arguing that they too had to work and pay for public services like all citizens. Undoubtedly, this hostile act towards traditional leaders in Burkina Faso who occupied a crucial role and had a major influence on rural communities meant that Sankara had technically declared "war" on one of the most powerful social forces in Burkina Faso's society (Dickovick, 2009). Trade unions also fought a lot with Sankara and Compaore ensured that he brought them closer to his regime, together with traditional leaders, so as to cement and entrench his government so that he would minimise dissent and prolong his stay in power. In his comparative study titled, *Revolutionizing Local Politics*, Dickovick (2009: 523) is insightful. He compared local governance experiments in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Uganda during the regimes of Sankara, Rawlings and Museveni, respectively. He observed that, "the cases point to a finding that success depends in large part to the extent on which national states

incorporate traditional local chiefs into local governance structures, with the relative power of organised labour and other social forces creating more or less permissive conditions”.

Part of Compaore’s plan of “rectifying” the revolution entailed terrorising supporters of Sankara and his ideas by making sure that security forces threatened anyone who was heard propagating Sankara’s ideas such that to mention Sankara’s name in any public platforms was considered taboo (Wilkins, 1989). In essence, what Compaore really meant by rectifying or correcting the August 1983 revolution was essentially to reverse all the gains and achievements of Sankara’s regime, especially in areas where his French handlers’ interests were jeopardised. Compaore, it would seem, learned that Sankara may have been too radical and fast-paced in rolling out some of his programmes which led to some of his initial supporters to begin questioning his way of doing things. Wilkins (1983: 387) arrived at the conclusion that, “There is a certain ambivalence: despite his high ideals, Sankara appears to have been too progressive for the peasants he stubbornly championed”. Indeed, Sankara may have been much ahead of his peers and time.

Aftermath of a tyrant – Revolution 2.0¹⁴ and the deposing of Blaise Compaore

After spending 31 years¹⁵ at the helm of Burkina Faso’s political power structure, Blaise Compaore was finally deposed on 31 October 2014 through popular mass insurrection, with the opportunistic help of the Burkina Faso military. Many things are attributed as triggers to Compaore’s ousting even before the situation in Burkina Faso got to boiling point after Compaore and his party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), announced that it wanted to amend the constitution to enable their leader, Blaise Compaore, to run for President again in the scheduled November 2015 elections (Chouli, 2015). Key amongst these is the murder of the journalist, Norbert Zongo, who was allegedly murdered by the military in 1998.

¹⁴ The October 2014 revolution is termed this way because it is the only revolution that is deemed as a full revolution after the August 1983 revolution (This was the first genuine revolution in Burkina) that culminated in Sankara’s Presidency. This view is upheld by a vast majority of the youth in Burkina Faso, especially those who participated or supported the protests that led to the removal of Compaore from office (Murrey, 2018).

¹⁵ Compaore spent 31 years in high ranking positions within the Burkina government if we include the four years that he and Sankara were in power following the August 1983 revolution, until Sankara’s life and regime came to a brutal end in 1987 at the behest of his colleague and friend, Compaore. Adding these four years to the 27 years (1987-2014) that he ruled Burkina Faso, this brings us to a total of 31 years that he spent in the clutches of power in Burkina Faso.

Another push factor is the impunity of Compaore's Presidential Security Regiment (known as the Presidential Guard) in political killings.

These two factors, plus the move by the CDP in attempting to change the constitution, are deemed as key reasons that led to the concerted efforts of different civic movements in Burkina Faso to organise and fight for the resignation of Compaore (ibid). One might add that another key factor and arguably the most important, albeit undermined or unrecognised by many, is the salient yet piercing influence of Sankara's spirit and indelible mark in the political history of Burkina Faso. The fact that his death remains a "mystery" and justice was never served for his death also encouraged mainly the youths of Burkina Faso (many of which were not even born or were very young during his Presidency) to demand radical changes and an end to the gruesome rule of Compaore which worsened their socio-economic conditions daily. These youths were led by two important hip-hop and reggae musicians – Smokey and Samska who formed a youth-based movement in July 2013 called *Balai Citoyen* (Citizen Broom) whose ideological foundations are inspired by Sankarism (ibid).

After fierce demonstrations that lasted at least two consecutive days, 30-31 October 2014, that led to protestors burning the national parliament,¹⁶ Compaore's 27-years rule as President came to a swift end. He was, however, rescued by the French who, "...after helping Blaise Compaore to become President of Burkina Faso [by using him to assassinate Sankara] and to maintain the Presidency for 27 years, smuggled him out, in the middle of the insurrection, to Cote d'Ivoire, thanks to their Special Operations Command on the ground" (ibid: 331). If this rescue effort by France's Special Operations Command is not meddling in internal affairs of a "sovereign" state, then I don't know what is. In addition, if there is anyone who had any doubts that Burkina Faso, like many other African countries, is still a neo-colonial state that still worships the empire, then this intervention by France in pulling out their stooge (Compaore) when the Burkinabe did not want him anymore should be evident enough.

After Compaore got smuggled out of Burkina Faso by the French, even before a transitional government could be appointed, Compaore's personal military (Presidential Guard), which was in essence an army within an army, that was highly trained and resourced, opportunistically imposed themselves as the captains of the Burkina Faso "ship". They singlehandedly appointed

¹⁶ See Appendix K for an image of what's left of the parliament that was burnt in October 2014 during protests that saw Compaore disgracefully deposed.

the second in command in the Presidential Guard, Isaac Zida, as head of state. The popular masses quickly fought this move by the army to usurp their struggle and hijack the people's revolution. A compromise deal was reached which saw Zida appointed as Prime Minister and Michel Kafando as President of the transitional government (ibid). The irony of this interim government leaders is that both the key positions of President and Prime Minister were occupied by the former employees of the ousted President, Compaore. This paradoxical appointment effectively compromised the gains of the "Revolution 2.0" from the outset because they claimed to have removed a tyrant in the form of Compaore, yet they agreed (or got outmaneuvered) to have the same people that presided over the rot during the 27 years rule (or misrule) of Blaise Compaore.

Chouli (ibid: 328) aptly concurs with the above observation by arguing that "although the new Transitional government derives its legitimacy from an insurrection carried out by those from below, the process of the transition was carried out from the top, even by the military hierarchy, symbolized by Lieutenant Colonel Zida". Striking parallels can be made between popular mass insurrections in Egypt in 2011 when Mubarak was removed from power and in Zimbabwe quite recently when Mugabe was also removed from power after over three decades as President. In both these instances, as in the case of Burkina Faso when Compaore was ousted in 2014, the army stepped in as if to join civilians in the fight against tyrants who overstayed their welcome in power, only to calm the situation so as to continue the status quo once the leaders are deposed (ibid). Strategic positions in cabinet were often assigned to military leaders in all these cases; this was particularly the case in Zimbabwe, and the neoliberal status quo is upheld through continuation of previously signed international treaties and protocols such as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the West.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to give a context to the Burkina Faso revolution by engaging in an analysis of the main ideas and contentions about Thomas Sankara's leadership as a former military man, his unorthodox governance strategies, etc. This helped me, after filtering most of the relevant works written about this subject matter, to identify a research gap and theoretical perspectives, and to ultimately structure my own research angle/niche. The research gap that was identified was that, in as much as there is some substantial research done on the Burkina Faso revolution,

not much was done to systematically and comprehensively situate Sankara's ideas and politics in the realm of thought leadership, African renaissance, Afrocentricity and in attempting to use his revolutionary project of development in Burkina Faso, as a guiding framework for development in contemporary Africa.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Theoretical underpinning is important in undertaking research studies of this nature because it helps the researcher to better navigate the literature and in collecting raw data as it acts as a researcher's 'compass'. Based on the theory that one adopts, the methodology and instruments used to answer the research questions will be coherent, thereby determining the overall character of the research output. This section outlines and explains three contending theoretical frameworks that the author considered as the most relevant in guiding the research process. Out of the three, two theoretical frameworks are adopted and a justification is given about why those two are the most appropriate theories for this thesis. It is important to note that some scholars use literature review, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework interchangeably while some argue that they are quite different in conducting research (see, for instance, Merriam and Simpson, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Rocco, 2009; and Imenda, 2014). Closely related as these research processes may be, they do have some distinctions, albeit small and blurry at times.

Explication: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), "the literature review and conceptual and theoretical frameworks share five functions: (a) to build a foundation, (b) to demonstrate how a study advances knowledge, (c) to conceptualize the study, (d) to assess research design and instrumentation, and (e) to provide a reference point for interpretation of findings." Rocco (2009: 125) describes how theoretical frameworks may be used differently depending on the research approach adopted; "In quantitative methods, presentation of a theoretical framework is crucial to the study, which will have been designed to test the theory. However, qualitative studies can also use a theoretical framework. In simple terms, a theoretical framework involves the presentation of a specific theory, such as systems theory or self-efficacy, and empirical and conceptual work about that theory." A slightly different yet related definition of what a theoretical framework is, and which is also succinct and easier to comprehend, is made by Merriam (2001: 45) who describes it as "the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of your study". Rocco (2009: 125-126) adds that,

...the structure comes from the author's disciplinary orientation and the literature related to the topic and theory under investigation. From these sources, a case is built for the importance of the study through a presentation and critique of the concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories found in a literature base and seen through a particular disciplinary orientation.

In sum, "a theoretical framework synthesizes existing theories and related concepts and empirical research, to develop a foundation for new theory development" (ibid).

Having attempted to define and explain what the theoretical framework is and why it is used, let us shift the focus to another closely related process – the conceptual framework. Rocco (2009) and Creswell (2003) argue that because qualitative empirical research is usually designed to explore and study research areas that are understudied, this results in finding emerging theories. Therefore, "when searching for emergent theory, however, a conceptual framework is important for situating the study" (Rocco, 2009: 126). In essence,

...a conceptual framework grounds the study in the relevant knowledge bases that lay the foundation for the importance of the problem statement and research questions. Whereas a theoretical framework is used when investigating a specific theory, a conceptual framework is made up of theoretical and empirical work relevant to the manuscript's purpose, where the purpose is not to further investigate a specific theory (ibid).

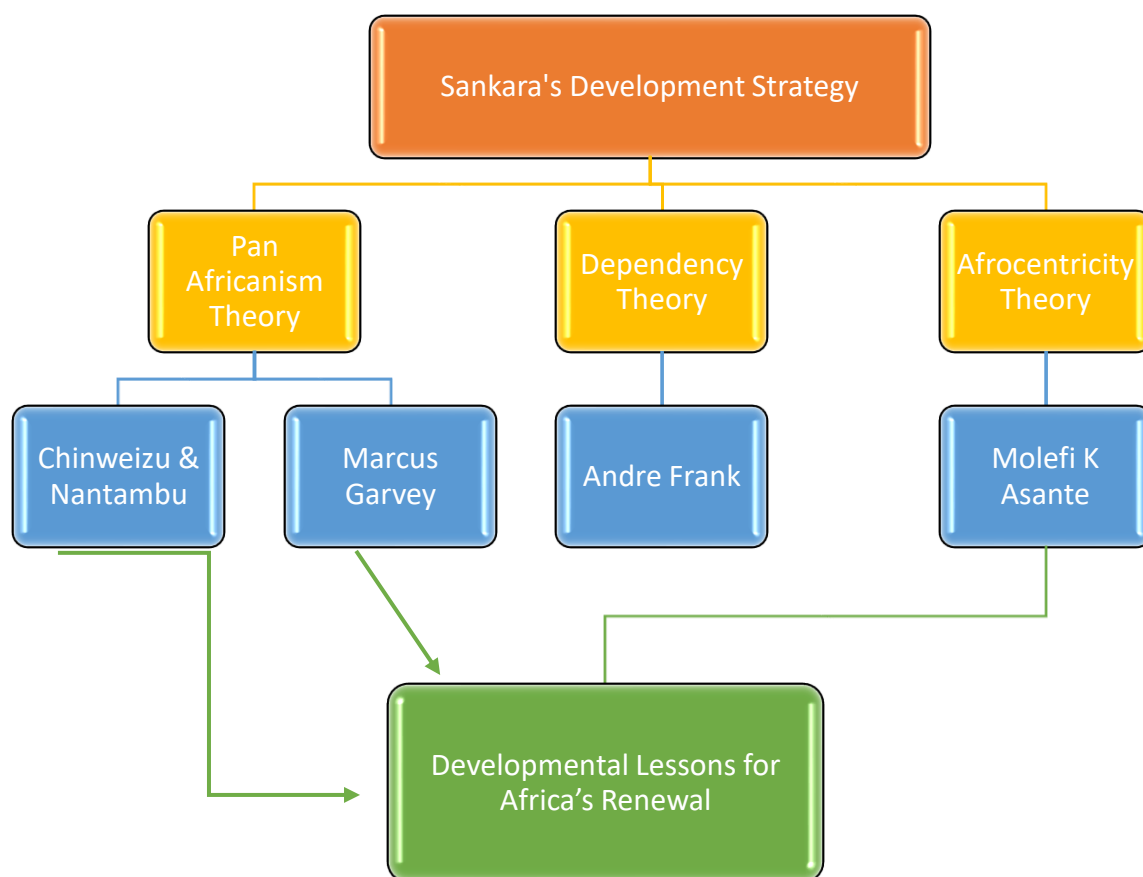
This study therefore, uses the two theoretical frameworks by critiquing and analysing Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity theories in the context of the Burkina Faso Revolution and how its leader, Sankara, used these theories in advancing unorthodox development approaches in Burkina Faso. The concepts, ideas, and philosophies emerging from the literature and thematic concepts emerging from fieldwork data are conceptually related and the aforementioned theories further investigated, which is why theoretical frameworks were better suited to help investigate the role Pan Africanism theory and Afrocentricity may have played in Sankara's development approaches and in his political thought and leadership.

The sampled and adapted theories are; Pan Africanism, Dependency Theory, and Afrocentricity. The first theoretical framework considered is Pan African theory rooted in the typologies of (by and large) Marcus Garvey, Chinweizu, and Nnamdi Azikiwe. The theory emphasises the mantra, "Africa for Africans, at home and abroad". Other typologies of Pan Africanism and Pan African Nationalism such as those of Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwesi Kwaa

Prah, and W.E.B. Du Bois, are also discussed. The second one is Dependency Theory as pioneered by Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin. And the third and last consideration was given to Afrocentricity theory, pioneered in the main by Molefi Kete Asante, a renowned African-American scholar who helped found African-American Studies discipline in American universities.

Figure 4.1 below shows the theoretical frameworks that guided the study. This visual depiction of the interrelationships between theoretical frameworks and Sankara’s governance approach will help me to systematically draw lessons from the developmental successes and failures of Burkina Faso during Sankara’s revolutionary administration in the period 1983-1987.

Figure 4.1: Theoretical Framework Schematic



Source: Author

Historical Background of Pan Africanism

Pan Africanism has multiple conceptions/perspectives. A vast majority of the literature on this ideology (and movement) contends that Pan Africanism began in the 20th century (in the 1900s) as a struggle weapon against enslavement, colonisation and dehumanisation of Africans in the diaspora (see Padmore, 1956; James, 1963; Mazrui, 1977; Andrews, 2017; Contee, 1972; M'bayo, 2004). However, some scholars are of the view that Pan Africanism's origin was in the late 19th century in the diaspora in the Caribbean and Euro-America, and later gained traction and immense support in Africa in mid-20th century (Kasanda, 2016). This movement, it is often argued, was started by diasporan Africans.

Sankara himself did not coin the term “Sankarism” or refer to it anywhere in his speeches and interviews; it came about long after he had died and scholars began studying his revolution and explained this term thus: “at the heart of the Africana philosophy known as Sankarism is the conviction that revolutionary ideas are imbued with dynamic life over and beyond the (individual, personal) revolutionary who develops these ideas. Ideas belong to people. In fact, ideas embody a people” (Mubangizi, 2019: 1). A more succinct definition is that “Sankarism is the philosophy grounded by the imperative of self-sufficiency and sustainable development that emanates from within and not from without” (Yimovie, 2018: 192). The term “Sankarism” gained prominence and use in the year 2000 when a political party, led by Benewende Sankara (whom I interviewed), called Union pour la Renaissance/Movement Sankariste (Union for Renaissance/Sankarist Movement), entered the political scene in Burkina Faso (Botchway and Traore, 2018).

Having explained the meaning of the political philosophy called Sankarism, it might be useful to give perspective about two related concepts, “Sankarist” and “Sankarian” which have also gained some traction in recent years. According to Le Jah (2015) [an interview of Sams’K Le Jah in French] cited in Botchway and Traore (2018: 22-23):

People who believe in the populist, easy-to-relate-to revolutionary political leadership of Sankara, and who work to animate a process of sustainable social change in Burkina Faso, might call themselves Sankarists, in reference to forms of political discipleship to Sankara. The aim of Sankarists is to take political [and economic]¹⁷ power and continue Sankara's work. Conversely, those who idolise him as an icon of social change, see him as a role model in life

¹⁷ My emphasis because Sankara understood very well the intrinsic connection between political and economic power dynamics in post-colonial Africa.

and admire his charisma and approve his philosopher-king leadership style are Sankarians or Sankariens.

The first Pan African Conference was hosted in Britain in the year 1900. This conference was organised and led by Henry Sylvester Williams (Andrews, 2017). Kasanda (2016: 179) explains that “originally, this movement relied on the idea that black people all over the world constitute a single nation and that they have a common destiny. Therefore, they must unite to fight discrimination and exploitation that they endure from white people”. There are numerous definitions of Pan Africanism perhaps indicative of the fact that there is no single one-size-fits-all definition of this ideology. M’bayo (2004: 21) shares the same sentiments in his attempt at defining this concept when he argues that,

...while the precise definition of Pan-Africanism tends to be elusive, however, most scholars and activists concede that Pan-Africanism encapsulates the conscious attempts of blacks, ‘at home and abroad’, to forge a united front aimed at combating the dehumanizing effects of slavery, racism, colonialism, and oppression of various sorts against all peoples of African descent.

Another important attempt at defining Pan Africanism by Dastile and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 121) is that it is,

...a redemptive project that embodied ideals of freedom from slavery; freedom from racism; freedom from colonialism; equality of human beings, right of black races to unite under a pan-African nation, right of black races to own resources in Africa, self-determination of black races and the building of Africa into an economic and political giant capable of rivalling Europe and America.

Kasanda (2016) is of the view that Edward Blyden is the forefather of both African Nationalism and Pan Africanism itself. Therefore, shedding more light on his background and his “African Revival” notion is useful. Blyden made acceptable and widely understood, the hallmark view of Pan Africanism even today, which contends that “black people all over the world constitute a single nation, and they share a common destiny” (ibid: 180). He was from black parents who were not slaves and were relatively well educated, in Saint Thomas, Danish Antilles. Like many of his Pan African peers at the time, he was a theologian, which he studied in the USA in 1850. He later (1851) migrated to Liberia because of his passion for Africa which he understood to be his fatherland and for which he was prepared to help awaken and strengthen to fight colonialism for African Revival to be a reality (ibid).

In short, “Blyden believed that it was in the spiritual and cultural realms that Africans would make their greatest contribution to humanity” (M’bayo, 2004: 31). He postulated that African Revival/Regeneration/Renewal/Renaissance had to be anchored on African cultures (including language) because these are important foundations upon which to build a strong African identity (ibid). In essence, I would argue that Blyden was in fact advocating for an Afrocentric (see Afrocentricity theory section below for more details) paradigm shift for Africans as an instrument for the achievement of African Renaissance. To this end, Blyden suggested that in order for African Revival to be achieved, Africans the world over had to: 1) explore both the African past and current reality; 2) avoid social mimicry or the imitation of white people by black people; and 3) to promote a new policy of education that contributes to the development of Africa (Mudimbe, 1998: 115).

Some of the connotations of Pan Africanism which are premised on race pride and racial consciousness of black people emanates from Blyden’s views on race at the time and this is because,

The issue of race is among Blyden’s preoccupations due to his own experience and the intellectual context of his time. He claimed the existence of multiple races, but he rejected their hierarchic classification. He did not believe in the alleged inferiority of black people. For him, every race was a natural unit with its own territory and mission. Blyden was proud to be black, and he exhorted his fellow black people to behave in the same way, as the consciousness and the pride to be so are essential to their progress (Kasanda, 2016: 181).

Some view the centrality of race and privileging of the black race and its cultural unity in Pan Africanism as “a fundamental weakness” as it excludes other races which are also oppressed (Kabede, 2004: 166). This critique of Pan Africanism based on race seems to lack adequate and nuanced historical understanding of the black struggle because no other race in human history has experienced the brutal and long-lasting oppression, enslavement and dehumanisation such as the black race. Therefore, it seems practical and justifiable that Africans “at home and abroad” launch a concerted effort by and of themselves to rid themselves of this historical injustice that was and continues to be perpetrated against them by other races.

According to Kasanda (2016: 181), “two steps characterized the development of Pan-Africanism: the original Pan-Africanism as conceived by African diasporans, and the Pan-Africanism developed by its African heirs”. Nantambu (1998) is one of the few scholars

(another is Andrews [2017]) who vehemently and convincingly opposes this widely held and often accepted view that Pan Africanism originates in the late 19th century to the early 20th century by the diaspora in the Caribbean and America. Nantambu's skilfully written and well researched paper that makes a huge dent in historically and empirically criticising and disputing the current generally accepted origins of Pan Africanism(s) is titled, '*Pan-Africanism Versus Pan-African Nationalism: An Afrocentric Analysis*'.

Kasanda (2016) seems to agree with Ali Mazrui's (1977; 2001) categorisation of Pan Africanism as having five constellations/strands with different meanings, including and excluding certain people and races. These constellations are, "1) Trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism, 2) Trans-Saharan Pan-Africanism, 3) Sub-Saharan Pan-Africanism, 4) Trans-American Pan-Africanism, and 5) Global Pan-Africanism" (Mazrui, 2001:108). In short, the first strand is premised on the solidarity between diasporan Africans (of African-American descent). It is "this trend of Pan-Africanism [that] dealt with the idea of race-based solidarity and the rehabilitation of black culture as a way to promote black people's dignity" (Kasanda, 2016: 182). The second constellation focuses on the relationship between Africans bifurcated by the Sahara, that is Sub-Saharan and Maghreb Africans. Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah were staunch advocates of this strand of Pan Africanism. The third category speaks to Sub-Saharan Africans only. "It stands on premises such as cultural unity, linguistic similarities, common economic interests and political affinities between black African countries" (ibid). "The fourth constellation concentrates on black consciousness amongst those of African descent in North America, the Caribbean and Latin America" (Kasanda, 2016: 182). It further seeks to renew links with African roots, culture, and philosophies in these geographic regions (Outlaw, 1996 and Gordon 2008). The fifth and last strand of Pan Africanism casts the net much wider as it represents all "black" people (and arguably other people of colour) who are oppressed the world over. "It includes the Arab world, Australian aborigines, people of New Guinea and Papua, and black Diaspora of Europe" (Mazrui, 2001: 108-109).

Before discussing selected key Pan Africanists that have shaped and underpinned the conceptualisation and operational use of Pan African theory, it is important to illustrate some key tenets of this movement and ideology which have made it a coherent force to be reckoned with in the history of African struggles. Key of the tenets, according to Esedebe (1982: 4), are; "Africa as the homeland of Africans and persons of African origin, solidarity among people of African descent, belief in a distinct African personality, rehabilitation of Africa's past, pride in

African culture, Africa for Africans in church and state, [and] the hope for a united and glorious future Africa.”

There are some significant overlaps with the key tenets and principles of Pan Africanism identified by different scholars. In line with the tenets outlined above by Esedebe (1982), Sibanda (2008: 238) adds the following:

- Afrika, the Motherland, is the central element of the ideology surrounding the espousing of Pan-Afrikanism.
- All people of Afrikan descent, world over, regardless of their physical location, whether they know it or not, are members of a single Global Afrikan Family.
- The entire Afrikan continent must be free of all forms of imperialism and neo-colonialism.
- Generally considering Afrika to be the source of the Afrikan people’s quest to revive their dignity, culture and therefore identity.
- Together with combating foreign exploitation of Afrikan people and Afrikan resources, Pan-Afrikanism is very much devoted to the oneness, unity and solidarity of the Global Afrikan family.

Pan Africanism – According to Diop

Cheikh Anta Diop, one of the foremost scholars and Egyptologists who almost single-handedly proved (through his rigorous scientific research) that ancient Egypt (Kemet) was first occupied and built by Black Africans (see Diop, 1989; Asante, 2014), is another important Pan African theorist and scientist whose work is important to briefly reflect on, as it relates to Pan African unity and Renaissance of Africa. This is why “in 1966, at the world festival of Black arts in Senegal, Cheikh Anta Diop, along with W. E. B. Du Bois, was voted the most influential scholar of the 20th century in the Black world” (Bandia, 2009: 226). A bit of context about Diop’s academic background is important to highlight so that the reader may have a through comprehension and appreciation of the massive contribution that Diop made in deconstructing, re-evaluating and reconstructing Africa’s historiography that was immensely distorted and bastardised.

Cheikh Anta Diop was a Senegalese scholar and politician, born in 1923 and died in 1986, who sought to empirically prove that Egypt’s (Kemet) history was an important part of the antiquity

of Black African history. He unequivocally (using multifaceted and multidisciplinary scientific methodologies) proved that ancient Egyptians who built pyramids and the highest form of civilisation at the time in the world were indeed Black Africans. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Dakar, Senegal, in Philosophy and Mathematics and later enrolled for his postgraduate degrees in Paris, France, where he eventually obtained his doctoral degree under much controversy because his thesis was in stark contrast to the founding pillars of Egyptology (Bandia, 2009) which was rooted in the distortion of African history and was simply racist in its ideological orientation.

While in France, Diop further studied "Mathematics, and also took courses in Sociology, Anthropology, Ancient History, Prehistory and Linguistics" (Bandia, 2009: 2013). In addition to these courses, he also studied Egyptology, nuclear physics, and Hieroglyphics (ibid). Cheikh Anta Diop's academic credentials are useful to reflect on as they indicate that he was a man of many talents because he studied different disciplines, from the so-called hard sciences like Mathematics and nuclear physics to the social sciences such as Ancient History, Sociology and Anthropology. This made him a force to be reckoned with by the imperial scholars at the time and a towering figure amongst African and global scholars.

To better understand his works and hypothesis about ancient Egypt (Kemet) and its relationship with the rest of Africa and the world, Immanuel Wallerstein (1961: 129-130) gives a succinct and in-depth summation of Diop's contribution to African historiography as follows;

Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to reconstruct African history has been the numerous writings of Cheikh Anta Diop. Diop has a theory that there is a basic global division of peoples into two kinds: the Southerners (or Negro-Africans) and the Aryans (a category covering all Caucasians, including Semites, Mongoloids, and American Indians) [...]. The Aryans have developed patriarchal systems characterised by the suppression of women and a propensity for War. Also associated with such societies are materialist religion, sin and guilt, xenophobia, the tragic drama, the city-state, individualism, and pessimism. Southerners, on the other hand, are matriarchal. The women are free and the people are peaceful; there is a Dionysian approach to life, religious idealism, and no concept of sin. With a matriarchal society come xenophilia,

the tale as a literary form, the territorial state, social collectivism [communalism]¹⁸, and optimism. According to Diop's theory, the ancient Egyptians, who were Negroes, are ancestors of the Southerners. This bold hypothesis, which is not presented without supporting data, has the interesting effect of inverting Western cultural assumptions. For, Diop, if the ancient Egyptians were Negroes, then European civilization is but a derivation of African achievement.

This reconstruction and re-assertion of African history signifies a concerted, pragmatic, methodological, and scientific effort by Diop to lay a solid foundation for African Renaissance and Pan African unity of all Africans across the world. This was indeed an intellectual, cultural, and decolonial revolution and renaissance of Africa by Africans for Africans. Bandia (2009: 2017) also reiterates the notion that “as both a historian and a physicist, Diop used his physics laboratory at IFAN¹⁹ to bring pre-historic facts to life to support the writing of an indigenous, authentic, history of Africa”. This is indicative of how Diop was able to marry his skills from different disciplines for the benefit of Africans by rewriting African history distorted through enslavement and colonialism.

It is this reaffirming of the glorious history of Africa that influenced a generation of Pan Africanists globally to fight for complete independence of African states which later culminated in the birth of African independent states in the 1960s. Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara and many other revolutionary Pan Africanists were indeed influenced by this classical unearthing of genuine African history, I would argue, by Diop and those that came before him like George G.M. James who wrote, *The Stolen Legacy* book. Indeed, “Diop's works, therefore, are part of the tradition of Pan-Africanism and the struggle against an intellectual colonialism that was guilty of a deliberate falsification of human history” (Bandia, 2009: 219). Bandia (ibid: 227) aptly puts it that “Diop bequeathed to Africa the awareness of a heritage born of a great ancient past. He was indeed a Pharaoh of knowledge.”

¹⁸ My emphasis. This is a social system where the community shares, equitably all that is within the territorial jurisdiction of that particular community, i.e., land, livestock, labour practices, food etc.

¹⁹ This is a French acronym for Diop's laboratory that was called 'Radiocarbon Laboratory' where he was Director at the University of Dakar in Senegal, which was later (posthumously) renamed Cheikh Anta Diop University.

Chinweizu (2010) argues that in the 20th century, there were three main strands of Pan Africanism propagated by W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, and Kwame Nkrumah. Chinweizu (2010: 2) defines Pan Africanism as,

An ideology made up of the most important ideas that have brought the Black race thus far in our quest for liberation from imperialism and racism, and for the amelioration of our condition in the world; it continues to be the vehicle for Black African hopes and aspirations for autonomy, respect, power and dignity. This ideology is embedded in the thinking of our intellectual progenitors, from Boukman of Haiti to Biko of South Africa.

At the core of Chinweizu's conception of Pan Africanism is that continental Pan Africanism (what Mazrui [1977] terms Trans-Saharan Pan Africanism) is a bad idea for Africa. In essence, he is opposed to the Nkrumahist form of Pan Africanism which sought to unite Africa geographically under one union government, under the rubric of the United States of Africa. Chinweizu (2006; 2010) cautions black Africans that they should rather opt for a Sub-Saharan form of Pan Africanism with a global appeal to all black people in the diaspora. He argues that unification of the largely black Sub-Saharan Africa with the largely Arab controlled North Africa would be suicidal for black people because the rest of the continent would be easily susceptible to Arabisation and Islamisation. Articulating somewhat similar sentiments about relations between black Africans South of the Sahara and Arabs in North Africa, Kwesi Kwaa Prah also warns that the "Afro-Arab borderlands"²⁰ like Sudan (and South Sudan), Mauritania, Djibouti, Mali, Niger, Chad, etc, are classical examples of the true nature of slave master-slave relationship between black people and Arabs in Africa (Prah, 2004).

Chinweizu (2006: 5) notes that "from the late 19th century until the 1950s, Arab expansionism in Africa was stopped in its tracks by the European powers who conquered and partitioned Africa among themselves. Only with the retreat of European political rule did opportunity arise for Arab expansionism to resume its march. And it promptly did". This shows that Arab expansionism has not really ceased since it began in the 6th century; it was simply paused by European invasion and colonisation of Africa, and it swiftly resumed, albeit under a veil and

²⁰ This term refers to countries that are between North Africa and Sub-Sahara Africa, which were, in a sense a buffer zone between these two regions of Africa. These are countries that are 'frontlines of this civilisation clash' as Kwesi Prah (2004) puts it.

using subtle tactics, during the independence era in the late 1950s and 1960s. Chiweizu (2010) further makes a case that black Africa does not need continentalism; instead, it needs the Garveyism strand of Pan Africanism.

Julius 'Mwalimu'²¹ Nyerere, who, like Kwame Nkrumah, was a continentalist Pan Africanist even though he believed, like the Monrovia bloc, that African unity in the form of a union government had be done gradually and cautiously through the regional blocs as building blocks. In 1997, he is reported to have changed his position drastically as he now believed that Sub-Saharan Pan Africanism was a more viable form of unity of black Africans to solve their problems. Nyerere explicitly repositioned his view during a speech he made to mark his 75th birthday celebrations in 1997 at the University of Dar es Salaam, thus: "North Africa is to Europe what Mexico is to the United States. North Africans who have no jobs will not go to Nigeria; they'll be thinking of Europe or the Middle East, because of the imperatives of geography and history and religion and language. North Africa is part of Europe and the Middle East" (Othman, 2000: 18). To clarify his point, Nyerere adds in the same speech;

Nasser²² was a great leader and a great African leader. I got on extremely well with him. Once he sent me a Minister, and I had a long discussion with his Minister at State House here, and in the course of the discussion, the Minister says to me, "Mr. President this is my first visit to Africa". North Africa, because of the pull of the Mediterranean and I say history and culture, and religion, North Africa is pulled towards the North (ibid:18).

These sentiments by a Minister of the then government of Egypt unequivocally shows the psychology of many Arabs (Afro-Arabs) in North Africa. It is indicative of their unapologetic allegiance and patriotism to the Arab world and the Arab League. Simply put, they view themselves as Arabs (that is to say, non-Africans) first, and they "become" Africans when it is convenient.

Kwesi Prah's understanding has closer inclinations to that of Chinweizu, even though Prah is not as emphatic on identifying Africans solely based on race, that is, as black people. Their point of convergence on Pan Africanism is mainly around the Afro-Arab question. Prah (2008) is of the view that "it is not possible to understand pan-Africanism outside of the context of the

²¹ Kiswahili language for teacher. Nyerere was in fact a school teacher for some years before becoming President of Tanzania.

²² Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein was the second President of Egypt from 1954 to 1970.

diaspora. Much of the theoretical foundations of pan-Africanism as political philosophy were created and actively shaped by the diaspora”.

Pan Africanism – According to Garvey

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was born on 17 August 1887, in St. Ann’s Bay, Jamaica, to black African parents who were both enslaved. Garvey’s views and position on race relations can be traced to “the Jamaican society [...] which was highly stratified and hierarchically arranged along colour lines. At the apex of society were whites, followed by a middle class of mulattos, while the majority black population was at the bottom” (M’bayo, 2004: 29-30). His conception of Pan Africanism stresses the global unity of all people of African descent, in Africa and the world over. His philosophies are based on political, economic, cultural and spiritual independence of African people and this, he believed, can only materialise if and when Africa is the centre²³ of all efforts to rehabilitate the lives of all Africans, “at home and abroad”. It is important to note that Garvey was not an intellectual, like Du Bois and Chinweizu, but he embodied, lived and practiced Pan Africanism (like Sankara), arguably more than any black leader in contemporary history. He posited that self-reliance was one of the key pillars that characterised Pan Africanism, as evidenced in what he once said, “I trust that you will so live today as to realize that you are masters of your own destiny, masters of your fate; if there is anything you want in this world, it is for you to strike out with confidence and faith in self and reach for it” (Jacques-Garvey, 2009: 57).

Through the creation of one of the largest black organisations in the world at the time, and arguably even in modern times, Garvey proved that he was serious about Pan African unity. His organisation was called the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and African Communities League, which boasted millions of members., Some estimate that it had membership in excess of 10 million globally (Chinweizu, 2010; Amy Jacques Garvey, 2009: 58). Asante (2003: 16), showing the significance of Garveyism as another standalone strand of Pan Africanism, argued that “Garveyism, despite the attacks and charges hurled against it until recently, was the most perfect, consistent, and brilliant ideology of liberation in the first half of the 20th century”. He further notes that Marcus Garvey’s seven-point plan which he hoped

²³ Note the similarities with this understanding of Pan Africanism with Afrocentricity theory explained later.

to use to unite all black people globally and eventually form a strong independent and self-sufficient black nation, entailed;

1. Awakening and uniting all Africans
2. Changing the thinking of Africans
3. Channeling emotional energies toward constructive racial interests
4. Mass sacrificial work
5. Through education in science and industry and character building, stress mass education
6. Prepare nationalists to run nations
7. Keep the young nations together after they were formed (ibid: 17).

It is also important to note that Garveyism received a lot of backlash from the Du Bois-led Pan African Congresses as his methods were deemed to be racist and too radical and divisive. Herbert Aptheker (1973: 251) gives a damning account of how Du Bois felt about Garvey and his conception of Pan Africanism thus; “the Pan-African Congress is for congress, acquaintanceship, and general organization. It has nothing to do with the so-called Garvey movement and contemplates neither force nor revolution in its program”. This shows that Du Bois did not mince his words in expressing the contempt in which he (dis)regarded Marcus Garvey as a person, and by extension, Garveyism itself.

In essence, Garvey did not believe in integrationist Pan Africanism. According to Smet (1980: 40), Garvey’s Pan Africanism was a “race-based nationalism” which was at odds with Du Bois’ integrationist and assimilation-seeking Pan Africanism. He (Garvey) was of the view that African Americans and other black people of African descent should build a strong state in Africa that can compete with any super power in the world, and this he believed, would give black people self-esteem and dignity in the world (Kasanda, 2016; Gordon, 2008). The “back-to-Africa” rhetoric in Pan Africanism is often associated with and synonymous to Garvey. However, his views on repatriation of diasporic Africans is often misconstrued to mean that all black people in the Americas should/had to repatriate to Africa. What he actually meant was that African people at home and abroad had to “return” to Africa in terms of their culture, value systems, psychologically and epistemologically (Nantambu, 1998). He was in fact urging Africans to be Afrocentric in all they do wherever they find themselves in the world.

Garvey understood that for Africans in the diaspora to have self-esteem and to be respected by other races, they had to secure the base and move the centre, to borrow Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s

(1993) words, by ensuring that Africa as a continent of their origin becomes politically, economically, culturally, technologically, and militarily strong. He explains; "...why do I say Africa when you are living in the West Indies and America? Because in those areas you will never be safe until you launch your protection internally and externally" (Hill, 1984: 397).

Pan Africanism – According to W.E.B. Du Bois

William E. Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois was an American born Mulatto²⁴. He "was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, on 23 February 1868, almost two decades before Garvey" (M'bayo, 2004: 28). Growing up in a small predominantly African American town called Barrington, Du Bois was for the most part insulated from blatant racism and segregation. He was only exposed to crude racism when he was much older at Fisk University in Tennessee (ibid). Unlike Garvey, Du Bois was one of the few African Americans who were highly educated and he was a prolific activist scholar. He developed many theories which sought to explain and give answers to black people's condition in America. Amongst these theories was what he termed, the "Talented Tenth" theory. This theory,

...germinated as he became increasingly convinced that a vanguard of educated blacks "from their knowledge and experience would lead the mass." In essence, the "Talented Tenth" would provide leadership for "civilizing" and "uplifting" the benighted and irrational masses of ordinary blacks both within American society and elsewhere in the world. Du Bois firmly believed that this was the way forward if African Americans were to achieve equality with their white counterparts (M'bayo, 2004: 29) and (Dubois 1968: 123).

This excerpt is indicative of the view that Du Bois regarded whites as the yardstick for success. Garvey did not believe in this view. Instead, he firmly argued that Africans should define their own success or failure outside of the Eurocentric prisms. Du Bois, like Garvey, had his own organisations, one called the Niagara Movement (formed in 1905), and the other, which is more known, was called National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

²⁴ According to M'bayo (2004: 30), Mulatto refers to an offspring of a black and white parent. In Jamaica, this light-skinned (colored) group discriminated against darker-skinned Jamaicans and believed they should succeed the British colonialists. On the one hand, this sheds some light about why Garvey had strong reservations for Mulattos due to his experience of colorism in Jamaica. On the other hand, it also gives us inside about why Dubois had so much disdain and contempt for Garvey, and this was because of his superiority complex in relation to black people, especially those who were not born in America. In writing about the notion of 'double-consciousness' of African Americans, perhaps Dubois was self-diagnosing as he exhibited his phenomenon in his relations with Garvey.

which was inaugurated in 1909 (Du Bois, 1968). M'bayo (2004: 29) contends that these organisations, to a large extent, “reflected his pacifist approach to racial problems. Significantly, they appealed mostly to educated and middle to upper class African Americans and mirrored Du Bois’s own middle-class background and perhaps his cynicism toward lower class African Americans”. Cornel West (1999) further gives more insight into the sub-conscious, perhaps even conscious, psychology of Du Bois as it relates to different classes of people, more so, black people. “[Du Bois] certainly saw, analysed, and empathized with black sadness, sorrow, and suffering. But he didn’t feel it in his bones deeply enough, nor was he intellectually open enough to position himself alongside the sorrowful, suffering, yet striving ordinary black folk” (West, 1999: 1967). It might very well be that Du Bois’ perceptions about poor, working class black people (especially those of a darker hue), were conscious as demonstrated by his own words that “wealth was the result of work and saving and the rich rightly inherited the earth. The poor, on the whole, were themselves to be blamed” (Dubois, 1968: 80). It is widely known that the poor are often black people, globally.

Pan Africanism According to Kwame Nantambu

As alluded to above, Kwame Nantambu holds a radically different view about what Pan Africanism is, its origins, and how it is often invoked in the literature. He contends that “the historical struggle of African people has heretofore been analysed within a Eurocentric, ahistorical, dysfunctional, and divisive context, thus culminating in the use of the concept of Pan Africanism” (Nantambu, 1998: 561). He instead argues that a comprehensive, unifying and historically nuanced analysis of Africans’ struggle should be formulated as “Pan African Nationalism”, rather than Pan Africanism as it is often conceptualised (ibid). Nantambu asserts that Pan Africanism was not necessarily merely a struggle that sought to react to racialism perpetrated by Europeans (and I would add, Arabs) against black people in the diaspora. He further asserts, unequivocally, that its origin is not in the 20th century (1900s) as it is often claimed (ibid).

In an attempt to explain the genesis of the Pan African ideal, Chrisman (1973: 2-3) reveals that, The vision of united effective action which characterises Pan African (nationalistic) thought originates from the systemic dispersal (and oppression) of African peoples for the last 500 years through slavery (and transnational capitalism) [...]. It was precisely the (capture) and uprooting

of millions of Africans and the conditions of slavery which laid the foundations for Pan Africanism and Black national-ism in the United States and the West Indies.

This approach to understanding the origins of Pan Africanism clearly shows that the widely held view that it began in the 19th to 20th century in the Americas could be a symptomatic analysis of this movement, as it ignores the triggers and causes of what uprooted Africans from the mother continent (Africa) in the first place. Walter Rodney (1976), during a lecture given at Howard University, adds another important dimension to the unorthodox analyses of the birth of Pan Africanism by arguing that,

It is in the Caribbean that Pan African sentiments were born [...] because the Caribbean is the first area of the world to which Africans were taken to labor as slaves and then immediately thereafter to the rest of the Americas. [...] It is in that context that the very necessity to define oneself as an African, if one came from the African continent, arose. Prior to that it was historically irrelevant. [...] Someone in the African continent would see himself in terms of his particular ethnic group or clan or village or family group.

This seems to be a more compelling argument for the genesis of Pan African foundations and thinking, that it began in the 15th Century at the height of the slave trade in the Caribbean, and I would add that perhaps one could even argue to stretch its origins long before European enslavement of Africans, to the 6th Century when the Arabs invaded Africa and began enslaving Africans and committing massive genocide by annihilating black Africans who used to occupy the whole of North Africa, what today is known as the Maghreb region (or Afro-Arab Africa). It goes without saying that, as far back as the 6th and 15th century, the term “Pan Africa/nism” was not used, but the tenets of this movement were already there, albeit at a smaller magnitude and manifestation than became the case from the 19th century.

Kwame Nantambu’s own analysis and calculation of when Pan Africanism could have been born and where, leads us to the B.C era. He argues that “African peoples in ancient Kemet (Egypt) resisted and fought against the following foreign invaders and conquerors” (Nantambu, 1998: 568). Amongst many, the key invaders he mentions are Persians in 552 B.C., Greeks in 332 B.C., Arabs in 652 A.D., French in 1798, and the British in 1881 (ibid). In sum, Nantambu (1998: 568) concludes that,

From an Afrocentric perspective, therefore, we must conclude then that based on the above irrefutable evidence, the first recorded Pan-African nationalist unification among African peoples occurred circa 3200 B.C. when the Pharaoh Aha [...] united upper- and lower Kemet into one nation.

He therefore gives this comprehensive definition of Pan African Nationalism, which he contends is the appropriate term to accurately describe African struggles, unlike Pan Africanism which he deems as Eurocentric:

Pan-African Nationalism is the nationalistic, unified struggle/resistance of African peoples against all forms of foreign aggression and invasion, in the fight for nationhood/nation building. The primary goal of Pan-African Nationalism is the total liberation and unification of all African peoples under African communalism. Pan-African Nationalism seeks to achieve African nationhood and nationality; human perfectibility based on the seven cardinal principles/virtues of Ma'at (Nantambu, 1998: 569).

Dependency Theory

There are three paradigms of dependency theory, namely, The versions of Andre Gunder Frank (1967a), Samir Amin (1974), and Immanuel Wallerstein (1974). Because of these different but closely related perspectives on dependency in underdeveloped countries in the Global South, some scholars (see, for instance, Palma, 1978 and Browett, 1985) argue that dependency theory should rather be understood and conceptualised as a school of thought in state of a formal fully-fledged theory because “no general implications for development can be abstracted from its analyses” (Palma, 1978: 881). It is important to explain, briefly, arguments and perspectives of the three versions of dependency approach to development scholarship, so that the application of the chosen strand can be better understood, if this theory were to be chosen for this study.

Perhaps at the outset, it should be mentioned that all dependency theory approaches emanate from the Neo-Marxist school of thought in an effort to counter Modernisation theories and Classical liberal economic paradigms. The common denominator in these three strands of dependency theory is “the notion that as a result of dependency and unequal exchange, capitalist development in some places (the core or the metropolises) continuously and necessarily creates underdevelopment at other places (the periphery or the satellites) in the world capitalist system” (Browett, 1985: 790).

Frank’s Dependency theory was based on the Latin American underdevelopment experience in the post-war period (after the second World War). In short, Frank (1977) argues that there cannot be any sustainable development in the periphery (satellites) for as long as there exists a global system of capitalism, and the only way to counter this exploitative system is for the core-periphery relationship to be drastically weakened and eventually severed. This is supported by

Palma (1978: 899) who explains that, “the only alternative [to dependency] becomes that of breaking completely with the metropolis-satellite network through socialist revolution or continuing to ‘under-develop’ within it”.

On the other hand, **Samir Amin** takes a slightly different approach to dependency. In his model of global capital accumulation, Amin theorises that in the metropolis, there tends to be more economic activity due to amassing of capital goods and mass consumption while in the periphery there is lesser economic activity because of production of luxury goods that are exported to the core, thereby decimating internal (periphery) mass markets. “This leads to growing inequality, technological dependence, political weakness among the oppressed – in sum, marginalization” (Amin, 1974: 9). For Amin, low wages in the periphery are key to keeping the periphery in the subservient and exploitative situation it is in.

Wallerstein’s contribution to the dependency school of thought, as some scholars content, is through the World Systems Theory (WST) which sought to explain the concept of what he called the “semi-periphery” (Browett, 1985). Semi-periphery denotes group of countries or economies that act as a buffer zone between the core and periphery, that is, they have some elements of both the core and the periphery. However, one major problem with this concept is that it does not explain how a country can transform from one category to the other (Ibid). For instance, Wallerstein does not spell out how a country can change from periphery to semi-periphery or from core to semi-periphery.

Matunhu (2011: 65), a critic of the dependency theory, claims that previous interventions (e.g. modernisation theory) that sought to develop the continent have dismally failed and that a new alternative is required. The alternative that Matunhu suggests is African Renaissance. Drawing from Walter Rodney’s (1972) seminal work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Matunhu (ibid) argues that the colonial legacy (umbilical cord) in Africa continues to hold the African continent hostage and in bondage. He posits that the only viable way to sever this “cord” is for Africa to, for a certain period of time, suspend certain aspects of their politico-economic relations with its former colonial masters, that is, with Euro-Americans. In essence, he advocates for delinking. The critique here in favour of dependency theory is that other theories have, since their inception, failed to reduce poverty and end the exploitation of Africa by the global North. In view of this, Mutunhu (ibid) thus posits that the antithesis to both modernism and dependency theory is African Renaissance theory which advocates for an inward-looking approach to solving Africa’s problems through African ways and indigenous knowledge

systems²⁵. Texts such as Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* were instrumental in further shaping the theoretical grounding of the study and in exploring how Sankara, as a thought leader, used Dependency Theory for endogenous self-reliant development of his country. Sankara understood that, for Burkina Faso to meaningfully develop in such a way that would change the material living conditions of ordinary Burkinabe` people, they had to delink its development strategy from the autarky dogmatic development model where capitalism is projected as the alpha and omega to development. This is why this theory could potentially be useful for this study.

Afrocentricity Theory

Application of Afrocentricity theory in analysing and problematising the Burkina Faso revolution is important because of its unique tenets and building blocks. It is widely acknowledged that Afrocentricity, as a theory, was pioneered by Molefi Kete Asante in his seminal books titled, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1980) and *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987). In the quest of epistemological centeredness, Asante (1991: 172) defines Afrocentricity as;

A frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person [...]. It centers on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people; culture, economics, psychology, health and religion [...]. An intellectual theory, Afrocentricity is the study of ideas and events from the standpoint of Africans as the key players rather than victims. This theory becomes, by virtue of an authentic relationship to the centrality of our own reality, a fundamentally empirical project.

This holistic definition of Afrocentricity was adopted in this research and was used to shape and unpack various aspects of the entire study, as a guiding framework or tool for analysis. There are, however, other definitions and conceptualisations of Afrocentricity, key amongst them is one given by Ama Mazama (2001: 387) which is that "Afrocentricity contends our main problem as African people is usually unconscious adoption of the Western world view and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks". Corroborating Asante's definition, she further clarifies that, "Afrocentricity stresses the importance of cultivating a consciousness of victory as opposed to dwelling on oppression" (Mazama, 2001: 389). In

²⁵ Again, note the similarity dimension of African Renaissance to Afrocentricity theory discussed in detail below. In fact, all these theories and ideologies have a similar goal – to achieve African Renaissance.

essence, this theory is about moving the centre of our world view to Africa, drawing from our positionality and existential reality.

It is important to note the ideological location of Afrocentricity theory. This paradigm (as Ama Mazama prefers to call it), or theoretical framework, has its roots in Pan African Diopian School of thought as pioneered by Cheikh Anta Diop. Molefi Kete Asante, in one of his books titled, *Facing South to Africa*, concedes that he first got the idea of “Afrocentric” posture to research from Cheikh Anta Diop and decided to borrow that term and use it for the theory that is today known as Afrocentricity. This, therefore, gave impetus to why, ultimately, Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity were paired as the two ideal theories for this study. Kevin MacDonald (2003:93) also reiterates that “globally, his (Asante) ideas and writings have spawned many successors and were seminal to the academic paradigm of Afrocentrism...”

In the preface of the revised and expanded edition of his pioneering book on Afrocentricity, Asante (2003: vii) gives a cogent explanation of why he wrote that book that helped develop and shape this theory. He explained thus, ‘I wrote Afrocentricity because I was convinced, and I remain convinced, that the best road to all health, economic, political, cultural, and psychological in the African community is through a centred positioning of ourselves within our own story’. Through this theory, Asante sought to reinvigorate the resurgence and renaissance of African agency through privileging our own narrative and epistemologies. As mentioned earlier, Afrocentricity requires that those who identify with it should be Afrocentric in all aspects of their lives, be it culturally, religiously, or otherwise.

In changing the name of his country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, only a year after the August 1983 revolution, Sankara indicated that he too was an unapologetic Afrocentrist. This is because although some detractors or even sympathisers of his revolution (wittingly or unwittingly) may have viewed the name change as a useless act, or even as grandstanding, as the Pan African Afrocentrist that he was, Sankara understood that “how we perceive ourselves influences how others perceive us” (Asante, 2003: 38) and by extension how they (mis)treat us. Asante (2003: 38-39) goes on to further substantiate the significance of naming and renaming ourselves;

...this being so, and other things being equal, the acceptance of African names will establish a more distinct perception of our Afrocentricity. A Muslim takes an Arabic name; A Christian takes a Christian name; we take African names. For some blacks the name change will be traumatic; for some whites our rejection of white names will be dramatic. Having sought to

become “white” even to the extent of maintaining our slave names which identified us with the white master, we still find it difficult to discard the trappings of slavery.

By changing the name Upper Volta, which was a mere geographical location of the country, the same way South Africa is, Sankara sought to rename his country with a more meaningful African name that his people could relate better with, using their own African languages of More` and Dioula. The idea behind choosing these two main languages from the main ethnic groups (Mossi, Dioula, and Peulh) in Burkina Faso was to foster unity and strong Burkinabe identity such that all ethnic groups felt that they had a stake in the “new” country. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1993), in his book titled, *Moving the Centre*, also made a strong case about the importance of naming and renaming of places so as to undo the brutal legacy of colonialism which renamed African people and their spaces so as to wipe away memories of themselves before Europeans and Arabs interrupted their civilisations, history and development.

Wa Thing’o (1981: 13) further argues that “‘language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture”. Therefore, it is through an Afrocentric language that Afrocentricity can grow and be nurtured to further Pan Africanism. Indeed, as the father of Afrocentricity suggests, this theory questions the approach that people take to all endeavours that humanity can conceive (Asante, 2003). A practical example of what it means to live Afrocentrically is given by Asante (2003: 113),

When you fly in an airplane and see the designs of the cabin, think how you would design it Afrocentrically. When you build an automobile, think how your engineering can be more Afrocentric. When you have to write a paper, think how it can be made more Afrocentric. When you plant seeds, think how the ancestors can give you the power. When you organise politically, do it in the best interest of African people. Whatever is in our best interest is always in the interest of all people.

The above example of how to practically live and action Afrocentricity sets this theory apart from many because it shows that it is not just an intellectual or theoretical endeavour, but it puts as much emphasis on action and changing lived experiences of Africans worldwide.

Another succinct yet precise conceptualisation of this theory and ideology is that “Afrocentricity as a science and method seeks to change the way we refer to ourselves and our history. It dictates the restoration of the entire African cultural project. It places brakes on our intellectual and theoretical disfranchisement” (Asante, 2003: 134). One of the founders and key proponents of Afrocentricity, Mazama (2001) mentions that this theory is not without

detractors or dissenters as is often the norm in scholarship. She argues that many opponents of the theory oppose it mainly because they do not fully understand it and often conflate it with Afrikology²⁶, Africanity²⁷ and other related concepts. Furthermore, she is convinced that other people and scholars simplistically reduce Afrocentricity to an intellectual exercise that has little or no bearing on the lives of ordinary Africans and their daily choices. She is of the view that “the lives of many others who have been deeply touched by Afrocentricity attest that [it] is indeed a true paradigm for African liberation” (ibid: 403-404). In fact, Asante (2007) is of the view that, although the two concepts (Afrocentricity and Africanity) are closely related/relatable, it is important to separate them because at the core of the former is the idea of consciousness and conscientisation of Africans, and this is what sets it apart from Africanity. He further asserts that, “One can practice African customs and mores and not be Afrocentric because Afrocentricity is conscientisation related to the agency of African people. One cannot be Afrocentric without being a conscious human being” (ibid: 17).

On the other hand, in as much as Archie Mafeje (one of the leading scholars on Africanity) was sympathetic to the paradigm of Afrocentricity, he had strong objections to it. In addition, his explanation and definition of Africanity is vastly different and even at odds with that of Molefi Asante and other “Africanist” scholars. In a paper titled “Africanity: A Combative Ontology”, Mafeje is at pains to explain the conceptual and theoretical differences between Africanity and Afrocentrism. It is interesting to also note that Mafeje refers to this paradigm as Afrocentrism, and not Afrocentricity, as its pioneers prefer to call it. He defines Africanity as “an assertion of an identity that has been denied; it is a Pan Africanist revulsion against external imposition or refusal to be dictated to by others. In this sense, it is a political and ideological reflex which is meant to inaugurate African renaissance” (2011 :37). He further adds that “in our view, this should not be confused with black solidarity in the original Pan Africanist sense, which included blacks of African descent in the diaspora. This is still valid and desirable. But, socially and conceptually, it is [at] odds with reality”. Mafeje, in short, therefore argues that Africanity is merely not just about cultural restoration of Africans or about their customs and values as described by Asante. Instead, “Africanity, if properly understood, has profound political, ideological, cosmological, and intellectual implications” (ibid: 32). Critiquing Afrocentrism,

²⁶ Afrikology means an all-inclusive epistemology based on the cosmologies emanating from the Cradle of Humankind – Africa (Nabudere, 2011: 2).

²⁷ This term refers to traditions, customs, and values of African people (Asante, 2007: 11).

Mafeje is of the view that “such self-affirming constructs as Afrocentrism are too confining and will succeed only in ‘ghettoising’ African intellectuals”.

Dhyana Ziegler (1995), in a publication titled, *Molefi Kete Asante and Afrocentricity: In Praise and in Criticism*, gives a balanced and interesting critique of Afrocentricity and its application in different settings, highlighting its pitfalls and successes. Ziegler for instance,

contends that the media have misrepresented Asante’s Afrocentric idea as a counter to Eurocentricity. She explains that critics overlook that it is ethnocentrism and bias, not Eurocentrism, that Afro- centricity counters. She challenges 21st century scholars to expand their theories to include the cultural context of the Afrocentric social reality (Leslie, 1998: 106).

However, some critics of the Afrocentricity paradigm often accuse it of being myopic and ethnocentric as it privileges Africans and people of African descent. Indeed, Asante (1998) also cautions us that we must not assume that Afrocentricity is just a mere polar opposite of Eurocentricity. He argues that, unlike Eurocentricity, Afrocentricity is not ethnocentric and does not seek to degrade or assume a hegemony over other ideologies and paradigms (Asante, 2007). Such critics seem to believe that the “centric” in Afrocentricity denotes that this paradigm presents itself and Africans as superior to other people and races (Ziegler, 1995). Nothing could be further from the truth. “Centric”, as used in this theory, simply implies that Africans globally should privilege their histories, experiences, and epistemologies in interacting with the rest of the world so that when they interact and learn from other cultures, they know exactly who they are and what defines them as a people.

In her attempt to highlight some of the flaws of critics of the idea of Afrocentricity, Mazama (2003a: 5) simplifies what she understands as a basic way of comprehending what Afrocentricity connotes. She explains that the “Afrocentric idea rests on the assertion of the primacy of the African experience for African people”. By African people, she refers to Africans in the African continent, those in the diaspora and all people of African descent. Mazama, as mentioned earlier, has played a central role in the shaping and strengthening of the Afrocentric paradigm as she prefers to call. She perceives it more as a paradigm than just a theory or ideology. Asante himself acknowledges and applauds the tremendous role played by Mazama in the birth and growth of Afrocentricity and he captures very well her contribution thus,

I have defined Afrocentricity as a consciousness, quality of thought, and an analytical process based on Africans viewing themselves as subjects, that is, agents in the world, but with the

intervention of Mazama it now becomes clear that there has to be a functional component to the concept. Afrocentricity is therefore a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where African seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history (Asante, 2007: 16).

Another strong critic of Afrocentricity is Ian Shaw (2004) who believes that Afrocentrists are ethnocentric because of their emphasis on Africa being the centre of their world view and their departure point in interacting with other cultures. Bandia (2009: 226) states that,

Shaw seems to view the debate over the identity of Ancient Egyptians as a mainly “black” issue, particularly in North America, where Afrocentrists are trying to better their lot by claiming a much more significant stake in the emergence of early civilizations. He points out that many Afrocentrists regard the science of Egyptology as so tainted that they will only refer to the country of Egypt as ‘Kemet’, the ancient Egyptian toponym which translates literally as ‘the black land’.

It would seem that Shaw conveniently chose to ignore a myriad of literature by Western Egyptologists and historians who refuted, against overwhelming scientific evidence presented by Cheikh Anta Diop and others, that Egyptian civilisation was developed by Black Africans. Shaw’s race blindness only sought to deny Africans credit where it is due because by admitting that Africa is the cradle of humanity and human civilisation, that would take away the false narrative that Greeks (Europeans) civilised the world. Epistemology and its dissemination thereof are not immune to the unbalanced power dynamics that govern the world and uses semantics and linguistic terminology such as “the first world” and “the third world” to mask the truth about political, economic, cultural and epistemic history of the world.

Asante (2007: 41) says there are at least five characteristics, indicators, instruments, or determinants of Afrocentricity or any Afrocentric project. that one must use in developing, reviewing or analysing Afrocentric work (Asante, 2007). These are;

1. An interest in psychological location;
2. A commitment to finding the African subject place;
3. The defense of African cultural elements;
4. A commitment to lexical refinement;
5. A commitment to correct the dislocations in the history of Africa.

These characteristics are particularly important for this study because they will help the researcher to strategically operationalise this theory in analysing Sankara’s Pan African and African Renaissance orientations and governance approaches in Burkina Faso. For instance,

these theoretical characteristics will be used to critique Sankara's governance and development projects by posing questions such as; "to what extent did Sankara defend African cultural elements and heritage, i.e., *faso dan fani* attire?" and "to what extent did he commit to lexical refinement of his country and in the education system, for instance?"

In summation of the Afrocentricity theory, it is important to bear in mind that it seeks to help Africans from all walks of life to achieve self-determination and self-pride (as strongly advocated by Garveyism) based on their histories and by re-centring them to Africa. It further seeks to fight and obliterate Western hegemony in all areas where it rears its ugly head. Thus, "to be for oneself is not to be against others; this is the most authoritative lesson that can be learned from the Afrocentric school of thought" (Asante, 2007: 121). Explaining the utility of this relatively new theory and research methodology, Reviere (2001: 709) argues that "these new Afrocentric orientations to data, or Afrocentric research methodologies, will push the inquiry into a higher realm where the methodology and the process of knowledge construction cease to take precedence over the well-being of the people being researched". This theory guided this study in the sense that the researcher tried to adhere, as much as possible, to the three set of beliefs that Asante (1980, 1987, 1990) insists Afrocentric researchers must abide by. These are:

- 1) A researcher must be liable for uncovering hidden and subtle theories that may be embedded in conventional and Eurocentric methodologies;
- 2) African ideals and values must be legitimised and given a centre stage in acquiring and analysing data;
- 3) Positionality and place of where the researcher and research is rooted should be illuminated in the study (Asante, 1990; Reviere, 2001).

Another important way in which Afrocentricity was applied in the study was using its two techniques that require the researcher to be introspective and retrospective throughout the research process (Asante, 1990). I had to introspect about my own experiences and positionality while also being retrospective about the context, time, place, and contending geopolitics during the time Sankara was president of Burkina Faso. This thesis was further guided by this Afrocentric theory and methodology because I used a number of African examples, idioms, values and philosophies (i.e., Maat, Ubuntu), concepts, voices (i.e., use of Afrocentric Pan-African scholars, interviewees chosen), and systems (i.e., letsema) in my analysis of Sankara

and his governance approaches in Burkina. Mkabela (2005) makes compelling case and illustration of how an Afrocentric method and theory can be used in investigating Indigenous African cultures.

Justification for the Choice of Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity Theories

Pan Africanism is an ideal theory/ideology to ground, shape and give a well calibrated direction to this study because of its ability to pull Africans of different backgrounds and from different territories around the world together. The central pillar which brings together Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora is the cultural unity of black Africa (to borrow Cheikh Anta Diop's words) and that they share a brutal history of enslavement, colonialism, imperialism and all sorts of oppression meted against Africans and people of African descent across the world. The relevance of this to the study of Thomas Sankara and his revolutionary project in Burkina Faso is premised on Sankara's foreign policy outlook which sought solidarity among all the oppressed and downtrodden people across the world. Specifically, what makes this theory an appropriate fit for this study is the ties that Sankara initiated in Harlem, New York, when he was there to attend the United Nations General Assembly in 1984. He gave a profound speech at the Harriet Tubman School in Harlem, where he said, "any African Head of State who comes to New York must first pass through Harlem. This is why we consider that our White House is in Black Harlem" (Sankara, 1984). It is evident enough that Sankara was well aware that African people's redemption the world over could only succeed if Africans globally unite to solve their problems which have a global character.

Pan Africanism is a very broad ideology of liberation for Africans from all walks of life and geographies, and within it, it has many other concepts and strands. This 'broad church'- like character makes it strong and appealing for many Africans even those from opposing ideological orientations. Of course, Sankara believed in international solidarity of the oppressed masses of the world and was for a unified Africa that worked together to fight imperialism (i.e., he wanted to end the debt crisis that was paralysing Africa).

Afrocentricity as an intellectual inquiry and paradigm is not a religion that must be blindly followed or applied without critical analysis and questioning of the issues at hand. This explains why even "the constituents of African values are debatable, even though they are central to

Afrocentric inquiry. There are no closed systems; that is, there are no ideas that are absolutely seen as off limits for discussion and debate” (Asante, 2007: 41). This implies that application of Afrocentricity in analysis of phenomena ensures that all pertinent issues that have a bearing on the issue at hand are tackled without restraint. In addition, this theory is capable of answering the where and how questions to African development challenges as it pertains not only to the political, economic and social aspects, but also to the cultural, philosophical, epistemological and broadly the intellectual bondage of Africans. This all-encompassing, deliberate and conscientising attribute of this theory makes it an ideal choice for this study for two key reasons.

One, Thomas Sankara was a dynamic unconventional leader who did not leave a stone unturned when fighting injustice and corruption. He was not restrained by old cultural norms or religion, meaning that this theory will be suitable to better help critique and analyse his governance tactics in Burkina Faso. Secondly, because of its emphasis on African agency and self-determination, Afrocentricity is better suited to guide this study on how Sankara, through his Pan African ideals, was able to fight imperialism and push for endogenous self-propelled development in Burkina Faso in the midst of the geo-politics of the time (i.e., the cold war, globalisation etc) and external pressure to maintain the status quo.

Dependency theory is not suited for this study because it is underpinned by the notion that in a global capitalist system, wealth accumulation and development of the metropolises thrives off the backs of the subjugation and poverty of the peripheries in the Global South. It is this parasitical and asymmetrical relationship between the core and the periphery that sustains and encourages the dependency of poor underdeveloped countries on their rich developed counterparts in the global north. The problem with this conception of development discourse for this study is that this theory simply explains and describes the pitfalls of poor countries being dependent on the rich countries, without necessarily giving viable antidote to this development problem. As alluded to above, Palma (1978) is of the view that dependency theory should be seen more as a school of thought than a standalone theory because its analyses do not yield adequate implications and lessons for development, besides it merely dissecting and describing the complex and unequal relationship between the North and the South. This explains therefore, why dependency theory could not pass the needle eye test and suitability criteria for the purposes of this study. It is mainly and merely descriptive of the periphery developmental challenges as it relates to the core. It does not offer viable and actionable alternatives to severing this parasitic core-periphery relationship.

Therefore, with the aid of these two chosen theoretical frameworks (Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity), the study explores and proposes more Afrocentric and Pan African governance and leadership practices, by learning from Sankara's four-year Presidency in Burkina Faso. The developmental aspects pursued here are through usage of Sankara's administration and his own personal leadership style(s) as a case study and framework from which "a million Sankaras" could be cultivated, so as to curb the moral and ethical leadership vacuum that plagues Africa. Alluding to this, Gumede correctly diagnosed the missing link that exacerbates the leadership deficiencies in Africa. He argues that "thought leaders are needed today who will not only bask in the glory of the past but commit themselves to learning from the thoughts of past African heroes and heroines such that they can lead Africa to the true path of renaissance and complete liberation from external influence and domination in its various forms and guises" (Gumede, 2015: 107).

Indeed, Afrocentricity is born out of the broad Pan African "church", only that the former is more focused on privileging African epistemologies and cultures by consciously acting to better the lived conditions of Africans. Asante (2014) further explains the link between Pan African Diopian historiography by also emphasising that Afrocentricity cannot just be subsumed within Diopian history as it has its unique attributes and contribution. He argues that "although it is true that Afrocentricity borrows from Diopian historiography in the arena of historical epistemology and methodology, Afrocentricity is much more far-reaching than a discussion of history" (ibid: 16).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical frameworks which is important in situating and grounding the study so that it has the requisite academic rigour in data collection and analysis process. It has outlined and explained three contending theoretical frameworks that the author considered as the most relevant in guiding the research process. These theories are; Pan Africanism, Dependency Theory, and Afrocentricity. Figure 1 was designed so that an easy to understand depiction of how the theories were selected and used so as to draw developmental lesson for Africa's renewal, from the Burkina experience under Sankara's leadership. Out of the three, two theoretical frameworks were adopted and a justification was given about why those two were the most appropriate theories. The two theories which were ultimately selected and used in giving the study a sound theoretical grounding are Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity theory. Pioneers and leading people who advocated for these theories were

discussed and the historical review of how these theories were conceived and evolved over time were also explained. The last section in the theoretical framework chapter justifies why these two theories were used together, instead of just using just one theory. And the primary reason why these two theories were used simultaneously in this study was because in as much they are closely related, they are also different and present unique attributes that made the study stronger when these strong attributes your combined, opposed to if only one theory and its strong attributes were used.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter describes how the research study was undertaken and what tools were employed in data collection and who the target participants were, how they were sourced and where they were interviewed. The study deployed a mixed method research approach which, in short, is a combination of the widely known and orthodox qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Like many mixed methods studies, the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches is hardly on an equal proportion. It is against this backdrop that this study hinges more on the qualitative research method than the quantitative one and the rationale for this is explicated in the chapter. The mixed method research undertaken in this study takes the form of QUAL + Quan = MMR type. The capitalised “QUAL” symbolises that most of the data gathered and reported is of a qualitative nature and the small letter “Quan” implies a marginally smaller amount of data was collected and reported on using quantitative research methods.

Research methodology/approach refers to the manner in which research is conducted, from conceptualisation, planning, piloting, data collection, data analysis, reporting of findings/results etc. There are broadly two primary forms of research methodologies – qualitative research and quantitative research. The third research methodology which stems from combination of these main two is Mixed Methods Research (MMR). Afrocentric research tactics were therefore infused into the chosen research methodology for this study, which is MMR, by centering the African and Burkina experience throughout the entire research process.

Philosophical Underpinnings

It is crucially important to note that all research methodologies, including the widely used ones, are a result of one or more of the four key philosophical/epistemological underpinnings which in essence are the lenses that any researcher (qualitative or quantitative) assumes. These four philosophical perspectives in research are; Positivist/Postpositivist philosophy, Interpretive/Constructivist philosophy, Critical philosophy, and Postmodern/Poststructural philosophy (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Positivist philosophy is concerned with predicting, controlling and generalizing results and it is mainly used in quantitative studies. Interpretive philosophy seeks to help the researcher

describe, understand and interpret their research qualitatively. Critical, or what some authors term emancipatory/transformational, philosophy is concerned with instilling change, freedom and liberation of the oppressed, and empowerment of the disenfranchised. Lastly, Postmodern philosophy is rooted in deconstructing, problematising, questioning and interrupting the status quo such as in postcolonial studies (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 12). This study adopted an interpretative philosophical paradigm because it sought to describe, understand, interpret and draw developmental lessons from Thomas Sankara and the Burkina August revolution, mainly using qualitative research approach albeit with an additional use of a bit of quantitative research approach as this is a MMR study.

The chapter is structured thus: the first section makes a case for why a mixed method research was opted for and this approach is explained in detail. The second section then sheds more light on how qualitative data was collected, the research methodologies/philosophical paradigms available and the one used, sampling techniques and research instruments and procedures used in data collection. Lastly, this section explains how collected data was analysed (using thematic content analysis), then delves to the step-by-step explanation of how this analytic process was executed in light of this study being a cross-language study. Reflections on how translation and transcription from French to English was undertaken ends this section. The third section describes how quantitative data was collected and analysed. The fourth, fifth, and sixth sections are on trustworthiness of the study, piloting of data gathering instruments, and how ethical considerations were undertaken respectively.

A Case for Mixed Methods Research (MMR)

Abridged Introduction to MMR

Quantitative Research + Qualitative Research = MMR

MMR divided into three (core) research designs:

1. Explanatory Sequential design

Sequential data collection, analysis, and reporting (Quan 1st → Qual 2nd = Integration)²⁸

2. Exploratory Sequential design

Sequential data collection, analysis, and reporting (Qual 1st → Quan 2nd = Integration)

²⁸ Quan means Quantitative Research and Qual means Qualitative Research and MMR refers to Mixed Methods Research.

3. Convergent design

QUAL²⁹ + Quan data collection, analysis, and reporting done simultaneously
([QUAL+ Quan] + compare = integration)

The above cursory representation of a convergent design means that qualitative data and quantitative data are collected, analysed, then reported at roughly the same time during the entire research process. This is done so that there can be a detailed comparison and contrasting of data when it is collected. This helps because data collected using one approach can be used to feed into collection of data using the other approach so as to tighten loose ends and to ensure that all key elements and angles of the research questions and objectives are addressed. This comparing and contrasting of data from both qualitative and quantitative research approaches culminates in the integration process (or mixing of data) for richer and more detailed results.

INTEGRATION (mixing)³⁰

Three types of integration in MMR:

A. Connecting

- This integration approach is used for Explanatory Sequential design

B. Building

- This integration approach is used for Exploratory Sequential design

C. Merging

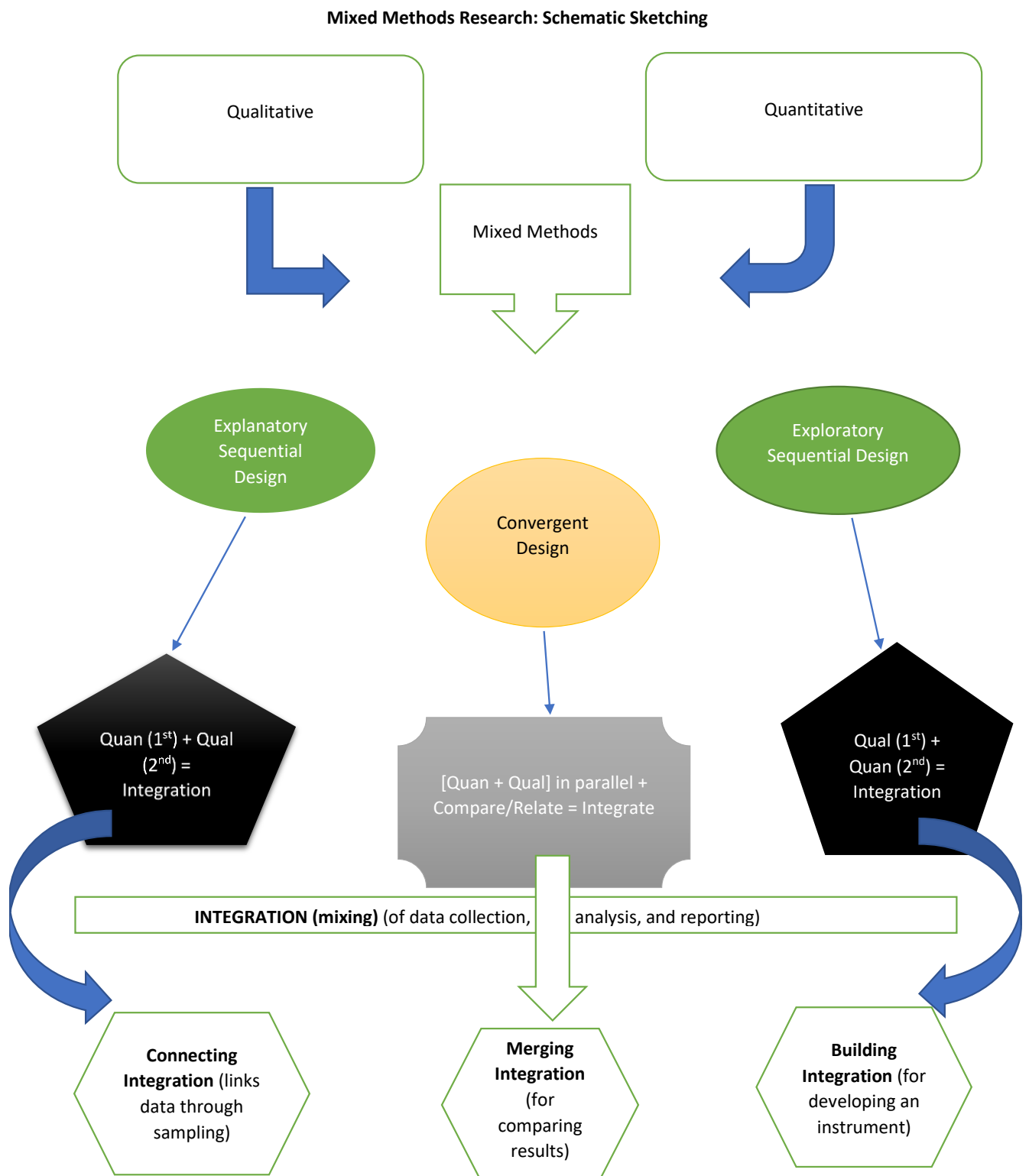
- This integration approach is used for Convergent design

Note: This study used a mixed method research of a convergent design type. Of the three integration (of collected data, during analysis, and reporting) types in MMR, merging as a form of integration of findings was used because this study sought to compare and contrast results from qualitative findings and quantitative results (See figure 5.1 for a visual depiction).

²⁹ Capitalised “QUAL” shows that this **mixed methods convergent research design** has more data collection, analysis and results from qualitative research approach than quantitative research approach.

³⁰ Later see a detailed section titled ‘integration of quantitative and qualitative findings’ that discusses the integration process, different options of integrating results, and how it is undertaken.

Figure 5.1: Simplified Visual Depiction of MMR Processes



Source: Author

Unabridged Introduction to Mixed Methods Research

This section discusses in detail what Mixed Methods Research (MMR) entails and why it was useful for this study. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007: 123) define Mixed Methods Research as,

...the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

This concise definition of MMR was formulated after careful consideration and analysis of 19 different descriptions by 21 highly rated scholars who write scholarly research on MMR (Cresswell and Clark, 2011). What this definition implies, albeit implicitly, is that mixed methods research is a form of triangulation of data and results using both classical research approaches: qualitative and quantitative. Another marginally different definition of mixed methods by Tashakkori and Creswell (2007b: 4) is that “mixed methods research is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry”. This second definition emphasises the importance of not only using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in gathering, analysing data and reporting findings, but stresses the importance of integration of data such that the sum result offers more details and results are more trustworthy than when just one research approach was used.

Below are some of the important components and steps formulated by Creswell and Clark (2011) that a mixed methods researcher must bear in mind and consider in undertaking MMR. The researcher;

- collects and analyses persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);
- mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;
- gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);
- uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of study;
- frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses; and

- combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study.

Justification for the Use of Convergent/Concurrent Design MMR

There are three core MMR designs and these are Explanatory Sequential design, Exploratory Sequential design, and Convergent/Concurrent Triangulation design. In addition to these widely used designs, there are three more advanced designs: Sequential Transformative design, Concurrent Nested/Embedded design, and Concurrent Transformative design (Creswell, Plato, Gutmann, and Hanson, 2003; Guetterman, 2017). It should be borne in mind that some scholars identify these six designs with small variations while these same designs are often referred to using different names. For instance, Convergent design is sometimes called Concurrent Triangulation, and Embedded design can also be called Nested design etc. (see Creswell, Plato, Gutmann, and Hanson, 2003). The two sequential designs (Explanatory and Exploratory), however, are often constant in how they are named, that is, their names hardly change irrespective of the scholar using them. The following is a synopsis of the six typologies of MMR designs, according to Creswell, Plato, Gutmann and Hanson (2003: 178-185; See also Creswell [2003]):

Explanatory Sequential design “method is a two-phase design where the quantitative data is collected first followed by qualitative data collection. The purpose is to use the qualitative results to further explain and interpret the findings from the quantitative phase.” Exploratory Sequential design “method is also a two-phase design. The qualitative data is collected first, followed by collection and analysis of quantitative data. The purpose of this design is to develop an instrument (such as a survey), to develop a classification for testing, or to identify variables.”

Convergent/Concurrent Triangulation design: “Qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently in one phase. The data is analysed separately and then compared and/or combined [...]. This method is used to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings. It is often used to overcome a weakness in one method with the strengths of another.”

Sequential Transformative design: “This type of design also has two phases, but allows the theoretical perspective of the researcher to guide the study and determine the order of data collection. The results from both methods are integrated together at the end of the study during the interpretation phase”.

Concurrent Nested/Embedded design: “This design includes one phase of data collection in which priority is given to one approach that guides the project, while the other approach is embedded or nested into the project and provides a supporting role.”

Concurrent Transformative design: ‘This method involves concurrent data collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. It is guided by a theoretical perspective in the purpose or research question of the study. This perspective guides all methodological choices and the purpose is to evaluate that perspective at different levels of analysis’.

Convergent design was chosen as it was deemed to be the most appropriate and relevant design because it is relatively easy to implement and integration typically is done towards the tail-end of the study, during interpretation phase. Furthermore, “this traditional mixed methods design is advantageous because it is familiar to most researchers and can result in well-validated and substantiated findings. In addition, the concurrent data collection results in a shorter data collection time period as compared with that of the sequential designs” (ibid: 183-184). Despite some of these merits of this design, it also has some limitations. Many novel researchers find this design challenging when there are many discrepancies in their findings from both approaches (qualitative and quantitative) because they may not know how to interpret such findings adequately (ibid).

Why use mixed methods?

As alluded to earlier, what makes mixed methods research powerful and viable is that it combines two different research approaches, thereby increasing the reliability or trustworthiness of findings as it harnesses and benefits from strengths of each individual qualitative and quantitative approach. This significantly decreases inaccuracies and inherent limitations that are prevalent in each of these research approaches when employed alone. Fetters and Freshwater (2015: 116) innovatively puts it thus: “quantitatively, we express this [mixed methods] as $1 + 1 = 3$. That is, qualitative + quantitative = more than the individual components”. They further argue that, “the $1 + 1 = 3$ integration formula also gives permission to question the assumptions of qualitative and quantitative disciplinary borders and blinders, to test the waters, and to create and discover new ways of thinking and producing mixed methods results” (ibid). Indeed, as Creswell (2011) persuasively argues, limitations and shortcomings of one approach when used alone, can be offset by strengths of the other approach when they are paired such that they can feed off each other in one study.

I used mixed methods for my study because of the nature of the research problem and objectives of the study, especially considering that Sankara did not live for long and also, most importantly, he did not systematically write down his ideas and political ideology, unlike many leaders who did such as Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Malcom X, Julius Nyerere, etc. The only coherently written materials by him are his speeches and interviews, which offer a great opportunity to engage, critique and analyse his political, social, economic, cultural, psychological and philosophical conceptions and legacies. Therefore, it was important and beneficial for this study to subject his “voice”, views and strategies to a critical and thorough research method such as this one. In addition, quantification of the most important expressions of ideas, thoughts, keywords that Sankara used was crucial so that it would be clear what concepts/ideas were of more importance in shaping his governance approach and development interventions.

Because Sankara was a “larger than life figure”, and many, including some of his critics, concede that he in a sense “lived before his time”, it is important that in studying his developmental strategy and in drawing lessons from his achievements and failures, we do not mask anything or claim easy victories (to paraphrase Amilcar Cabral). Because Sankara was emphatic on practice and was always exploring new ways of solving problems in a pragmatic and contextually sensitive manner, Creswell and Clark (2011) are therefore correct in suggesting that,

Mixed methods research encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values), rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative research and others for qualitative research. It also encourages us to think about a paradigm that might encompass all of quantitative and qualitative research, such as pragmatism.

Indeed, as a pragmatist revolutionary and dynamic leader, Sankara requires a pragmatic philosophical orientation of research in studying his leadership and governance models. This study employed convergent research design. See Table 1 for merging integration for this study. Detailed findings emanating from this integration of a merging type process are expanded on in the findings chapter.

Integration of Qual and Quan Findings

Once data from both qualitative and quantitative research has been independently analysed, integration of findings becomes the next important step in mixed methods study. According to

Woolley (2009: 7) “quantitative and qualitative components can be considered ‘integrated’ to the extent that these components are explicitly related to each other within a single study and in such a way as to be mutually illuminating, thereby producing findings that are greater than the sum of parts”. In essence, the significance of integrating findings from both approaches is because the idea is that more enriched findings will emerge that would be more powerful and meaningful compared to findings that would have emerged from just one approach.

The notion of “fit” of data integration of qualitative and quantitative data is very important to test during the actual integration process. This refers to the extent of “coherence of qualitative and quantitative findings” and this assessment of fit of integration results in three possibilities: confirmation, expansion, and discordance (Guetterman, 2017: 197; Fetters, 2013). It is useful to fully understand under which conditions one or both of these possible outcomes occurs/would occur during integration of findings. Fetters (2013: 2143-2144) explains that,

...confirmation occurs when the findings from both types of data confirm the results of the other. As the two data sources provide similar conclusions, the results have greater credibility. Expansion occurs when the findings from the two sources of data diverge and expand insights of the phenomenon of interest by addressing different aspects of a single phenomenon or by describing complementary aspects of a central phenomenon of interest [...]. Discordance occurs if the qualitative and quantitative findings are inconsistent, incongruous, contradict, conflict, or disagree with each other.

Merging of qualitative and quantitative data can be done in one of three ways:

- 1) Comparing results side-by-side,
- 2) Transforming data, and
- 3) Constructing joint displays (Guetterman, 2017).

The first integration is through merging done by comparing findings of the qualitative research process with those of the quantitative process so that similarities and differences can easily be noted and contextualised. The second, which is “integration through data transformation, happens in two steps. First, one type of data must be converted into the other type of data (i.e., qualitative into quantitative or quantitative into qualitative). Second, the transformed data are then integrated with the data that have not been transformed” (Fetters, Curry, and Creswell, 2013: 2142). The third one seeks to “integrate the data by bringing the data together through a visual means to draw out new insights beyond the information gained from the separate

quantitative and qualitative results” (ibid: 2134–2156). This approach is useful in that it helps the researcher summate findings and package them in easy to read tables, figures, graphs, or matrix.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative Research Design

In the main, the study also employs a qualitative research method that is guided by the main research question which is, “what leadership traits and governance strategies could Africans learn from Sankara’s revolutionary government to advance African unity and renaissance?”. According to Gabrielian (1999: 170), qualitative research approach is “a paradigm of research with certain assumptions about ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), and methodology (tools)”. In other words, qualitative research method seeks to discover knowledge, ideas, patterns, and unravel societal dynamics in an inductive way. This inductive process of qualitative research is another important characteristic that differentiates it from quantitative research. So, what is this inductive process? It is a process where “researchers gather data to build concepts, hypothesis, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research [quantitative research]” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 17). Lakshman, et al. (2000: 371) contend that in qualitative research method, “investigators are concerned with the beliefs, motivations and actions of people, organizations or institutions” which is what this study seeks to investigate in Burkina Faso during Sankara’s Presidency.

This research method is important because of the descriptive nature of the proposed study as outlined by the research questions. Furthermore, a choice of a research method is underpinned by certain philosophical assumptions that guide the entire research process (Harper, 2011). In my case, this philosophical “driving force” is realism, which “assumes that there is direct relationship between what is observed and the nature of reality” (Harper, 2011:86). A more comprehensive and all-inclusive definition of qualitative research by Van Maanen (1979: 520) is that this is “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world”.

Because of the complex nature of qualitative research pertaining to finding a single widely acknowledged definition of this research process, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that it may be viable to delineate key characteristics of this research method for ease of identification and application in research. The four key characteristics mentioned by most scholars as the most important in better understanding what qualitative research entails are as follows: “the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive” (ibid: 15). It is important to note that with all his/her subjectivities, the researcher is the primary research instrument (something that quantitative researchers frown upon because of the obvious issue of reflexivity³¹). However, in Qualitative research, this very notion of subjectivity and reflexivity (researcher bias) is embraced and “can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (Peshkin, 1988: 18).

There is often a grey area between research methodologies and research methods. It is important for the purposes of this chapter and study to delineate the two. Research methodologies are the "what" of research. That is, what research approach will be used? E.g., case study, ethnography, narrative etc. Methods on the other hand are the "how" of research. For instance, how will data be collected and analysed (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). This is the key difference between methodology and method. A more nuanced and comprehensive explanation of methodology is that it is “the theoretical, political and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their implications for research practice and for the use of particular research methods” (Robson, 2011: 528). Methods, on the other hand, as explained and conceptualised by Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012: 378); Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Creswell, (2009), refer to “techniques used to acquire and analyse data to create knowledge. Methodology is thus a strategy of enquiry that guides a set of procedures”.

³¹ This refers to an acknowledgement in research that researchers are inherently biased towards certain philosophical beliefs and ways of knowing. Therefore, being aware of this bias is central in qualitative studies such that a researcher can try to minimise this bias as much as possible.

Research Methodologies/Approaches/Philosophies

Now that I have given a brief synopsis of which research design is chosen and why, let us turn our attention to the five most commonly used and acknowledged qualitative research methodologies, after which I will dwell on the qualitative research methodology chosen for this study and justify why I opted for it. These are: ethnography, phenomenology, narrative (discourse) analysis, grounded theory, and case study (see Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner, 2012; Richards and Morse, 2013; Creswell and Poth, 2018).

The first qualitative research methodology is *ethnography* and it is arguably the second most widely known research design after case study design. This qualitative research design has its roots in anthropology in the 19th century where anthropologists would engage in participant observation in the “field” often for extended periods of time (This could take months or years), what is called longitudinal research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). It is important to note that “anthropologists ‘do’ ethnography, a research process, as well as write up their findings as an ethnography, a product” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 28-29). This design is, however, not only confined to anthropology as researchers from other fields also use it for their studies to leverage some of its important and distinctive attributes, such as its distinct focus on human societies and their culture(s) (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

The second qualitative research design is *phenomenology* which was founded in 1889-1938 by Edmund Husserl. It is both a philosophy (paradigm) and a research method (Richards and Morse, 2013). Phenomenology is underpinned by two major assumptions, and these are that perceptions are indicators of individuals experiences in the world as they perceive and live their lives daily. The second assumption is that “human existence is meaningful and of interest in the sense that we are always conscious of something” (Richards and Morse, 2013: 68).

Narrative analysis/research is the third qualitative research design important for consideration. This refers to the study of language in use (hermeneutics) (ibid). It is a research design that utilises hermeneutics which is about study of written texts and the meanings those words convey beyond the surface value use of such words/texts. Narrative analysis therefore “extends the idea of text to include in-depth interview transcripts, life history narratives, historical memoirs, and creative nonfiction” (Patton, 2002: 115).

Grounded theory is the fourth qualitative research design under review. This research design was pioneered by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 in what was then considered to be their “revolutionary” book titled, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Grounded theory is different from the other qualitative research designs because it is used solely to build theory that stems from and is “grounded” in the data that is gathered. Furthermore, “the type of theory developed is usually ‘substantive’ rather than formal or ‘grand’ theory” (ibid: 31). The theory generated through this design is context specific and responds to daily situation/challenges of society, and it is important for theorising about process and how things change over time (ibid).

The fifth and last qualitative research design is *case study*, which as alluded to above, is possibly the most known research design, and part of this could be because case studies are also used in quantitative (positivist) research methods and also in Mixed Methods Research (MMR). Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 37) define a qualitative case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system”. They further explain that “the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation, characterises a case study” (ibid: 38). This type of qualitative research design is quite challenging to discern and apply in research compared to the other four designs mentioned here. This is because the researcher must be very clear about what qualifies as a “case” to be investigated and what falls outside the confines of the stated case and its criteria within a bounded system or geographical area. Creswell (2013: 97) gives a detailed and easy to grasp perspective on a qualitative case study;

A case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes.

Stake (2005) outlines three typologies of qualitative case studies. These are not signifying different research methods, but are merely helpful in guiding the researcher based on the peculiarities of research questions of a case study research topic. The first one is *intrinsic case studies* which are concerned with solely focusing on the intrinsic and intricate features of a specific case. The second typology is *instrumental case studies* which are important in making wide ranging claims beyond the case studied, answering research questions by using the chosen case in a bounded system. The third one is *collective case studies* which are premised on

comparative analysis of multiple cases taking stock of patterns, similarities, and differences in the cases studied (ibid).

This study therefore, was of an intrinsic case study type because it was mainly focused and devoted to better understanding and critiquing the specific case/features/governance modalities of Burkina Faso under the leadership and Presidency of Thomas Sankara. It did not seek or attempt to make wide ranging claims and generalisations about other African countries and/or their leaders, neither did the study seek to make a comparative analysis of Burkina Faso with other countries during the period under study. Any slight comparisons during data analysis and in the review of literature, for instance, with Ghana and its President at the time (JJ Rawlings), was done only to because of the close relationship between Sankara and Rawlings which meant that they would have inevitably shared ideas about their two countries, as was evident with their decision to have joint military operations between the two countries.

Justification for the Chosen Research Methodology

Qualitative case study is the most appropriate research design for this study because my bounded system is Burkina Faso's governance and developmental strategies from 1983-1987 and the unit of analysis is Thomas Sankara. Furthermore, in line with Creswell's (2013) definition of case studies, this research delved into an empirical and context-based data collection in the bound system of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, in particular, in a detailed, in-depth and systematic manner. This was done by undergoing field work using multiple sources of data collection such as interviews with colleagues and experts on Sankara's presidency, observation research of institutions, legacies and infrastructure built during Sankara's era versus the one built (or not built) during Blaise Compaore's era. Documentary analysis and audio-visual data was also collected (see Data Gathering Procedures section below for more details). The type of qualitative case study suitable for this study is instrumental case study as described above as the study attempts to draw lessons from Burkina Faso in the period 1983-1987 and subsequently attempts to make recommendations for other African countries on how they can best develop their economies based on the Burkina Faso experience under Sankara's Presidency.

Phenomenology and narrative analysis were excluded because this study was not about merely documenting and drawing meanings from individual people's experiences about Burkina Faso's political history and the role of Sankara thereof; it was very specific and targeted on

certain people who had intrinsic and “educated” views about Sankara based on a clear criteria, key being that they had a lot of experience and history of either working with, or studying, Sankara’s governance approaches in Burkina Faso when he was President. Ethnography research was excluded because this study was not about getting deeper understanding about Burkinabe society and their culture as a group/nation and ethnographic techniques such as active participant observation and prolonged periods in the “field” were not practiced. Grounded theory, which is essentially a theory-generating design was not applicable and suitable, hence excluded, because this study did not seek to generate a specific theory, but simply draw developmental lessons from the Burkina Faso and its revolutionary leader.

Figure 5.2 below gives a simplified schematic visual depiction of the five qualitative research designs discussed above with the aim of giving the reader a succinct summation of qualitative research methodologies.

Figure 5.2: Five key qualitative research methodologies



Source: Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 42)

Research Methods

The next crucial step after selecting the research methodology is setting out clear criteria for sampling (unit of analysis) dynamics (ibid) and this is discussed and explained in detail in the following section.

Sampling techniques

The population for this study included every potential key informant who was insightful and had first-hand knowledge on Sankara and the Burkina Faso's popular revolution of August

1983. The population was deliberately left that broad so that there was a larger pool of potential interviewees for me to access because I had anticipated that it would not be easy to gain access to the kind of people who intimately knew Sankara and his governance strategies in Burkina Faso. The sample, which was drawn from the population, encompassed, but was not limited to, Sankara's family members/close friends and his colleagues that he governed with and served with in the army of Burkina Faso, and his other close acquaintances in Burkina Faso.

The technique that was used in sampling potential key informants was non-probabilistic purposive sampling that was largely dependent on network sampling/snowball sampling (see Chein, 1981; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Some scholars term this sampling framework *purposeful* sampling (Patton, 2015) because “the logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling derives from the emphasis on in-depth understanding of specific cases: information-rich cases. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling” (ibid: 53).

It is important to differentiate between different types of purposive sampling as delineated by scholars such as Creswell (2013), Patton (2015) and Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006). The most commonly used purposive sampling approaches are: typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, and snowball or chain sampling (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Typical purposive sampling is a basic sample that often adheres to the norm. This can be a person, situation or phenomenon that is studied. Unique purposive sampling is the opposite of typical sampling. Maximum purposive sampling seeks to understand a wide scope of participants or phenomena under study, from both ends of the spectrum, that is, “any common patterns that emerge...or negative or discomforting instances of the phenomena” (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014: 36). Convenience purposive sampling is quite self-explanatory in the sense that it is sampling that is depended on the available resources and time of the researcher, thus making this sampling approach not-so credible because it often yields “information-poor” data. The last and widely known and used purposive sampling approach is snowball/network/chain sampling. This approach is simply about locating key informants that one can access with relative ease and then ask those informants to help him/her locate more relevant participants for the study.

This study employed both maximum variation sampling and snowball sampling because I anticipated that finding suitable participants for this study would not be easy due to the political

sensitivity around the assassination of Sankara and the fact that his assailants have not been held accountable, and justice is yet to be served on his murder. Furthermore, data collection (fieldwork) was undertaken in 2017, just two years after the ousting of the 27-year (mis)rule of Blaise Compaore which was known for its brutality and censorship of Burkinabè freedom of expression. Talking publicly and frankly about Thomas Sankara and circumstances around his assassination were for a long time considered a taboo as the state security forces would clamp down on Sankara's supporters or sympathisers. It was important, based on the theoretical framework of the study and its research questions, that maximum variation purposive sampling was used because drawing lessons from Sankara's governance strategies could only be coherently done if both his supporters and opponents were consulted and interviewed so that a balanced view would be solicited.

Snowball purposive sampling was used in conjunction with maximum variation sampling because, as alluded to earlier, it was envisaged that getting access to the right participants would be quite difficult because of the political sensitivities that surrounded Sankara and his death. So, it was important to source few key informants who would point me to some of their colleagues who were also very knowledgeable about Sankara and Burkina Faso's socio-economic and political history before, during and after the Sankara Presidency. Furthermore, because Burkina Faso is a Francophone country and I am not proficient in the French language, which posed major limitations in my abilities to source credible participants by myself prior to, and during my fieldwork in Ouagadougou, hence the need for a snowball approach in my sampling.

Nine key informants who are vastly knowledgeable about Sankara and his Pan Africanist ideas, and interviews with 3 political economy experts on Burkina Faso and Sankarism, were undertaken. In addition, 2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were undertaken at University of Ouagadougou I Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo. Participants in these FGDs were identified through snowball sampling. The first FGD had 10 students, most of who were undergraduate English language students and some were members of student organisations at their university. The relatively high number of participants in this first FGD was due to the unexpected positive response rate to our invitation for participants and it seemed the topic itself generated a lot of enthusiasm, excitement and curiosity among the students. The second FGD had 5 students, comprising mostly of senior students at the university in their final year of undergraduate studies and some doing their postgraduate degrees. Therefore, the **total sample size was 27**

participants from the in-depth interviews (12 participants) and two FGDs (comprising a total of 15 student participants).

The criteria used in sampling potential participants was based on, first, the list of individuals I created during my literature review and from the research efforts that I undertook from documentaries which I watched from YouTube and other sources. This list was compiled based on the proximity that such people had to Sankara before and during his Presidency. Their role in Sankara's government and their ease of access as some were at the time of the fieldwork still in government as opposition party Members of Parliament, or in other roles. Others like the former President of Ghana, Jerry J. Rawlings who worked very closely with Sankara, was very difficult to access due to his being a former President of a different country altogether. I, however, did not just give in, I attempted to get hold of him through his foundation based in Ghana, without success. Second, another criterion was asking the participants that I managed to interview while in Ouagadougou to suggest some of their peers who they thought would be more knowledgeable about certain aspects that the people I had interviewed could not cover. For instance, I was introduced to Halouna Traore (the only survivor during the assassination of Thomas Sankara and his compatriots), by another participant whom I had interviewed. Furthermore, Sankara's family,³² which I met towards the end of my fieldwork, also recommended other people that I could interview.

The question on the appropriate sample size has been a thorny one for many decades in qualitative research and to this day it has not been put to bed because of the multitude of research that is undertaken in qualitative studies, which seek to achieve different things. Guest, Bunce and Johnson, (2006: 60) give credence to this age-old ambiguity, arguing that "after reviewing twenty-four research methods books and seven databases, our suspicions were confirmed; very little headway has been made in this regard". Morse (1995: 147) also noted that "saturation is the key to excellent qualitative work", however, also acknowledging that "there are no published guidelines or text of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation". That, therefore, means that there is no simple rule of thumb that can answer

³² I was fortunate enough to meet Thomas Sankara's sister, Blandine Sankara and his older brother, Valentin Sankara. This meeting happened after many attempts of trying to schedule a meeting with them but eventually they humbly acceded to my requests. The cherry on top was that we all met at the erstwhile President's (Thomas Sankara) own modest house in Ouagadougou. I set on a couch he used to sit on and I was shown some of his hard copy pictures while in the army wearing his regalia. It is quite a daunting task to put into words and to fully capture the true feeling and privilege this occasion was for me as an admirer, student, and critic of Thomas Sankara.

the question of the sample size required of each research. However, there are important considerations that each researcher must adhere to so that their sample size is enough to answer their individual research problem (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). Experimenting with the concepts of data saturation and variability in qualitative research, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006: 61) found that most articles and books they reviewed on this subject “recommended that the size of purposive samples be established inductively and sampling continue until ‘theoretical saturation’ occurs”.

Reaching saturation or redundancy means that “you begin hearing the same responses to your interview questions or seeing the same behaviours in observations; no new insights are forthcoming” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 101). It seems that one important criterion in deciding on the sample size is ensuring that the researcher reaches saturation. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 202) also reiterate this point,

In purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus, redundancy is the primary criterion.

For this study, saturation was also a key criterion which guided me to decide on the sample size of the sum total of 27 participants, and indeed saturation was reached before conducting the last interview. This sample size was deemed enough because scholars such as Kuzel (1992: 41) found that “when looking for discomfiting evidence or trying to achieve maximum variation” at least 12 to 20 data sources/interviews (sample) are enough for a heterogeneous sample, while 6 to 12 interviews would suffice for a homogenous sample. This, therefore, places my sample size well within these prescribed/recommended sample numbers for my heterogeneous study. Given the nature of this study, fieldwork was critical but the study could have been undertaken without fieldwork as similar studies have not undertaken fieldwork (see, for instance, a relatively recent UNISA thesis by William Mpofu (2017) on Thabo Mbeki, titled *‘Thabo Mbeki: A Philosopher of Liberation (A Study in Political Rhetoric)’*).

Data-gathering procedures

Qualitative Research

Documentary analysis and interviews (individual interviews and focus group discussions) of key informants were the main data collection approaches/procedures. Where feasible,

observation research³³ approach was also utilised through site visits of strategic institutions and infrastructure in Burkina Faso that were built by Sankara's administration, vis-a-vis those that were built by Compaore in his 27-year rule. For instance, *Salon International de l'Artisanat de Ouagadougou* SIAO, (International Arts and Handicrafts Trade Show of Ouagadougou) and a city hall, House of the People (*Maison du peuple*), built by the Sankara's government, were visited and a memorial tower (*Monument des Martyrs*), that was erected after the fall of Compaore's Presidency, was also visited (see Annexures A, B, and C for images of these sites).

On the 14th October 2017, which was a day after my arrival in Burkina Faso, as part of my observation data collection, I visited the cemetery (called Dagnoen) where Sankara's body is purported to have been hurriedly buried on that fateful day of 15 October 1987 when he was killed along with 12 of his colleagues (see Appendix H for images of the cemetery and grave). This expedition of his graveside and tomb formed part of data collection for two key reasons. One is that it was important to witness first-hand the area and state of his tombstone because its condition, location and safety (or lack thereof) are important in gauging his importance or lack thereof in Burkinabe society, and in further unravelling the circumstances of his death and politics at the time. Secondly, as an African who believes in indigenous African culture and belief systems, it was of utmost importance that I visited Sankara where he was laid to rest so that I could let him know that I was there to learn more about his political praxis and contributions to decolonising Burkina Faso so that his spirit would guide the research work that I was about to embark on. After witnessing the shocking state of the cemetery and what used to be Sankara's tomb, because his remains were excavated for DNA analysis so as to ascertain whether those were indeed his bones, I poured libation on his grave. Further observation of stadiums and residential areas for civil servants built during Sankara's presidency were undertaken. I also saw Blaise Compaore's brother, Francois Compaore's, mansion in Ouagadougou which was vandalised during the 2014 uprising (which they term revolution 2.0) which toppled Compaore. Such observations of the sheer size and luxury of that house, vis-à-vis Sankara's house, was a clear indication that the August 1983 revolution was not just "rectified" as Compaore claimed, it was derailed, halted and reversed.

³³ See Annexures A, B and C for visual depictions of SIAO, Maison du peuple, and Monument des Martyrs respectively.

Furthermore, subtle behavioural observations were also undertaken throughout the researcher's stay in Ouagadougou during the fieldwork. For instance, I observed how a sizeable number of mainly young Burkinabe had stickers of Che Guevara's face on their motor bikes but it was on rare occasions that I would spot Thomas Sankara's face or any of their previous/current leaders on their motor bikes. This seemed to be an important expression through imagery and it was noted in my field notes for further interrogation and analysis. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that Sankara was very clear that he did not want to be idolised, be it through bill boards of him or through statues and other artistic forms³⁴. Further analysis on this concept will be revisited in detail in the Data Analysis and Findings section of the thesis.

Ideological underpinnings of the "Thomas Sankara Oath"³⁵ were rigorously investigated and strategies of how to potentially infuse this practice in the governance approaches of African states formed a central focal point in operationalising the methods of the study. Thomas Sankara Oath was a legally binding agreement that all public servants signed, committing to using public services which they themselves provided to the larger community. For instance, this oath meant that ministers and other people occupying high positions in the public sector were obliged to use public schools, public hospitals, public transport system, etc., with the assumption that public servants would improve quality of services they provide to society because they too (and their families) would be using them.

It was important to collect data using different data collection approaches because this helps in ensuring some level of trustworthiness of findings due to triangulation of data. Triangulation is a term often used in quantitative studies to ensure that results are valid and reliable. Because this term has its genesis in quantitative studies, Richardson (2000) argues that triangulation is premised on pinning down one focal point that is fixed and then "measuring" it using different approaches so that results can be generalisable in similar settings. Richardson (ibid) thus makes

³⁴ It is interesting to note that Thomas Sankara's gigantic statue was recently (2nd of March 2019) unveiled at the exact spot where he was killed on 15 October 1987. One can only wonder what Sankara would have thought about this act, considering that a lot of money would have been spent in constructing the statue and inviting guests of honour like his friend, confidante and colleague, JJ Rawlings of Ghana. Also, worthwhile to note is that Sankara's family (it is reported) was not present during this unveiling of the statue.

³⁵ This binding ethical conduct document was not called 'The Thomas Sankara oath', it is Sankarists in recent times, like a social mobilisation movement in South Africa called September National Imbizo (SNI) and later Black First Land First (BLF), that began labelling this oath this way. Both these organisations were/are led by a self-proclaimed Sankarist and Bikoist (Someone who follows Steve Biko's Black Consciousness ideology) called Andile Mngxitama, a former Member of Parliament under the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party, the third largest political party in South Africa.

a case for using a different term in qualitative studies that seeks to also ensure trustworthiness in the context of themes/patterns generating qualitative studies, that is, we must *crystallise* data. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012: 138) further add that,

In qualitative research, what we are dealing with is not an exact measurable finding, but an emerging reality that we are describing and analysing. What we describe as our findings is that which crystallises from the various data-gathering techniques and data analyses. This crystallised reality is credible in so far as those reading our data and analysis will be able to see the same emerging pattern, which adds to the trustworthiness of our research.

Data was further gathered through participant observation. I took part in at least three events in Ouagadougou, on my third day of arrival and penultimate day of my stay. I was in Burkina Faso for fieldwork from 13 October 2017 to 26 October the same year. The first event that I was a part of was a march organised by civic organisations, political parties and Balai Citoyen (Citizen Broom)³⁶ – a Sankarist youth-led movement which played a leading role in the ousting of Blaise Compaore in October 2014 and throughout the transition period until 2015. This march was on 15 October 2017 (see Annexure D for the image of the march), the same day that Sankara was killed 30 years earlier. The protest march sought to pressurise the newly elected government post Compaore, to find justice for Sankara and his 12 compatriots who were mercilessly killed in 1987. It also sought justice for Norbet Zongo, an investigative journalist who was killed by the Compaore regime in 1998. Zongo was killed for unearthing chilling details of the murder of a driver of Blaise Compaore's brother. It is alleged that both Zongo and the driver were murdered by Compaore's Presidential Guard elite soldiers, who behaved like his personal army and were well known in Burkina Faso to be untouchable and behind many political killings and abductions of those who opposed the government.

The second event that I took part in was Thomas Sankara's commemoration that marked 30 years of his assassination. This event also took place in the evening of 15 October 2017 at the city hall (Maison du peuple), which was incidentally built by Sankara's revolutionary government. The commemoration was organised by Union Pour La Renaissance (*Parti Sankariste*), which is a Sankarist Party whose leader, Advocate Benewende Stanislas Sankara,

³⁶ This grassroots youth movement was officially established in 2013 at the revolution square, 'Place de la Nation' in response to the then President Blaise Compaore who wanted to change to the constitution by extending the presidential term, as a means to rule indefinitely. I met both co-founders of this popular movement, reggae and hip-hop musicians who are widely known and celebrated across Burkina. They are Karim Sama a.k.a. Sams'K le Jah and Serge Martin Bambara a.k.a. Smokey respectively. I unfortunately could not interview them even though we had agreed to meet, as they had busy performing and travelling schedules.

was the First Vice President of Burkina Faso at the time of the research whom I was fortunate to interview at his political party headquarters offices. Another important figure present at this commemoration whom I later got to interview via skype was Aziz Salmone Fall.³⁷ The theme of the commemoration was ‘*L’influence des re`volutions et du Sankarisme sur les mouvements sociaux au Burkina Faso*’, meaning ‘the influence of revolutions and Sankarism on social movements in Burkina Faso’.³⁸

The third event that formed part of my observation research approach was a traditional leaders’ meeting and traditional healers’ exhibition that was held at “*Musee National*”, the National Museum of Burkina Faso, on 23 October 2017. I had gone to the national museum so that I could both observe the traditions and practices of Burkina people and get an opportunity to get to speak with one or two of the traditional leaders about their experience and views of Sankara’s government. The anticipated interview(s) did not materialise as most chiefs that were there left the event much earlier than anticipated because of some logistical glitches and my contact person and organiser of the event who was to introduce me to them also disappeared and I could not reach him after the event.

It was important that I also use observation research because, “as an outsider, an observer will notice things that have become routine to the participants themselves, things that may lead to understanding the context. Observations are also conducted to triangulate emerging findings, that is, they are used in conjunction with interviewing and documentary analysis to substantiate the findings” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 139).

Interviews and FGDs

All face-to-face individual interviews were conducted with key informants in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with the exception of two interviews that were conducted through a skype video call because the participants were in the United States of America and in Canada respectively at the time of data collection. Prior to any interviews being conducted, I tested my data

³⁷ Aziz Fall is important because he has for the past 20 years been coordinating the International Campaign Justice for Sankara (CIJS), which is group of lawyers who have been fighting through the UN for justice to be served on the murder of Sankara. He is also a Pan African academic teaching Political Science and International Relations at McGill University in Canada.

³⁸ Please note that, unless elsewhere stated, all French to English translations in this study were done with the help of Dr Gerad Kamga, a researcher and legal practitioner at University of Pretoria who is well versed in both languages.

collection instruments (piloting) by way of telephonic interviews. This helped me modify my interview schedule and work on the time I spent on each interview. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule such that interviewees would not steer away from answering research questions. This structuring of the questions also ensured that the study was focused and it further helped the researcher to save time and keep interviews approximately an hour long, except for the FGDs which tended to take much longer than anticipated. Once interviews went well beyond an hour, I realised that the respondents would begin to be fatigued and would start repeating themselves and shortening their responses. However, because of the detailed nature of qualitative research method employed, interviews were simultaneously allowed to be fluid and interviewees were occasionally given ample time to fully express themselves as some interesting concepts/issues emerged, which I was not privy to.

Of the 12 individual interviews conducted, only three were done in English and without the assistance of the interpreter who was also my research assistant in Ouagadougou. Because I could not speak More`, French or any other language widely spoken in Burkina Faso, I had little or no option but to get the assistance of some Burkinabe` who were fluent in More`, French and English languages to help facilitate and help me in organising appointments for the interviews. Again, because I was not familiar with the city of Ouagadougou, the assistants were very helpful. I had two assistants, one used to be an undergraduate student at University of Ouagadougou and went on to further his studies in Ghana. The other assistant was also a young person who studied Fine Arts in Denmark and was back in Burkina Faso, job hunting and doing menial jobs. The rationale for having the two assistants was because both of them told me that they would at times be busy so I had to make contingency plans so that my data collection would not be negatively affected or even halted when one of them was unavailable to help me navigate my way around the city for interviews with participants.

Anticipating how difficult it would be to meaningfully interview participants by myself in a Francophone country, I set out to get the English version of my interview schedule translated from English to French. For more details on this process, see a section on cross-language studies and translation in this chapter. This was done so that participants could have their own French version of the questions during the interviews because I wanted them to clearly understand the questions I was posing in the language they are most comfortable with. This was important so that nothing (or little) would be lost in between the cracks during and after the interview process and when translations had to happen at a later stage. This was a daunting

task because it meant I had to keep a close eye and ear on both the respondent and the research assistant so that I would be able to make follow up questions and probe where need arose. The summated translations of the respondents' answers from my assistants as the participants were answering questions meant that the interview process took much longer than I had anticipated. This is normal in cross-language studies like mine. However, this was important to do because had I left it to the participant to simply read the French version of the interview questions and respond, then I would not know if the answers given were based on the questions asked, or if the participant may have misunderstood the question, thereby giving an inappropriate answer. This would have adversely affected the credibility and trustworthiness of my analysis and findings. As they say, GIGO! 'garbage in, garbage out'. That is, if I did not ensure that my participants fully understood my questions, I would have received bad responses which would have adversely affected the quality and credibility of my study in its entirety.

Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted at the University of Ouagadougou's main campus on 20th and 23rd October 2017 consecutively. "A primary difference between focus group research and other types of research, such as surveys, individual interviews, and laboratory experiment is that data collection occurs in and is facilitated by a group setting" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2015: 17). The first FGD, as indicated earlier, had approximately 10 undergraduate student participants who were mostly English-major students at Ouaga University. Such students were sought with the help of my research assistant, and purposefully sampled because they at least had some proficiency in English and I could directly have a discussion with them without needing extensive assistance and translation from my research assistant. This approach proved to be quite useful as I was able to get more out of these students through my follow up questions and probing. There were also student activists among the participants in the FGD and their inputs proved to be quite significant as some of them spoke from experience from their youth-led political activism in Burkina and they drew a lot from their participation in revolution 2.0 that helped oust Blaise Compaore.

In terms of gender composition, about 30% of these students were female. Gender parity and gender mainstreaming was something that was important for me (as it was extremely important for Sankara). However, I was, due to reasons beyond my control, not able to get enough female participants for both FGDs and individual interviews. It would have been useful if I had secured a 50% representation of women throughout my interviews so that enough Burkinabe` women would have reflected on the experience of Sankara and what they thought about him 30 years

later, considering that women were top of his agenda during his Presidency. Because of the dynamics of this focus group that predominantly had male students, I purposefully tried to push for the voices of the female counterparts to be heard. It was evident to me that most of them were quite reserved and not so outspoken like their male counterparts. Because most, if not all, of the students in this FGDs were undergraduate students, their age ranged from 18-23 years.

The second FGD which happened two days after the first one also took place among students at the same university. The only difference about this group beside it being much smaller than the first one (5 participants) is that it was composed of only senior university students who were doing their postgraduate studies (masters and honours level) and they occupied strategic positions within the university in the student organisations such as the debating forum which they hold weekly and I met them after one of such debating sessions on campus. This group was more informed about the political economy and geo-politics of Burkina Faso, France, Francophone Africa and the world at large. Some of the participants would have been born during the Sankara government era as their age ranged from 28 to 34 years. See Annexure E and F for pictures of FGD 1 and FGD 2 participants respectively.

It is important to note that the FGDs undertaken were equally (if not more) important as individual interviews because they gave the researcher greater insights and more perspectives about how and what the youth of today in Burkina Faso think about the legacy and philosophies of Thomas Sankara when he was at the helm of government and what his relevance is to them in modern day Burkina Faso. Another reason why it was important to deploy focus groups as part of data collection strategies is because of “the interactive discussion through which data are generated, which leads to a different type of data not accessible through individual interviews” (Hennink, 2014: 2). Perhaps this category of youth that I engaged with may be a small segment of the youth of Burkina Faso because they are, in a sense, by virtue of them being university students, a minority and of a certain class, vis-à-vis the general lay youth in the remote rural areas and those languishing in the streets of Ouagadougou unemployed and or unemployable. Therefore, the issue of social class could very well be an important factor that may have influenced (positively or negatively) the findings of this study.

The general approach to the interviewing process was underpinned by an Afrocentric ideal and posture in the way that I, as the researcher, viewed and interacted with the participants. In as much as the fact that I could not speak their indigenous languages like More` or the French

colonial language automatically exposed me to be seen as an “outsider”, I tried to engage with the participants as their “equal” and my interactions with them were underpinned by my willingness to learn and let them be the “experts” during our conversations. A brotherly Pan-African spirit was also another crucial approach and demeanour that I conducted the fieldwork with.

[Archives \(documentary, audio, and video analysis\)](#)

Literature on the history of Pan Africanism, African Renaissance, Burkina Faso’s popular revolution of August 1983, and Thomas Sankara’s leadership style was read and critiqued. Video archives on Sankara were also strategically selected and watched so that more insight into the life and leadership of Sankara would be attained. Since most of the archives are in French, I had to source a proficient French speaker, reader and writer to be my translator (during and post the data collection) so that they could translate videos such as documentaries into English for me. It was not feasible, because of financial and time constraints, to translate all important archives, written literature, audios and videos. However, only the most important of these data sources were translated from French to English so that I did not miss crucial information merely because it was delivered in a language that I did not understand.

Documents used in gathering data included books not only about Thomas Sankara and his August 1983 revolution, but also books and journal papers on Pan Africanism, African Renaissance and Burkina Faso’s historiography since its independence in the 1960s; Burkina Faso–French–Francophone countries’ politico-economic and cultural relations, “The Third Way” in development and governance discourse (i.e., unconventional leadership and governance approaches outside of the Western influenced democratic governance as we currently know it), forebears that helped usher African independence from colonialism and African heroes and heroines. These are some of the key concepts that I used in sourcing credible data and literature which was relevant and instrumental in helping me better understand contending influences that helped shape Sankara’s thinking and his choice of leadership, governance, and development approach(es). All these seemingly external factors such as the Cold War would have had some impact on Sankara’s thinking and decisions at the time because of the interconnectedness of the world through trade and geo-politics.

Audio-visual material/data was sourced mostly from YouTube on the internet by searching for phrases such as Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso, Foreign aid and debt in Burkina Faso, etc. Beside the YouTube website, www.thomassankara.net website was another important source of information about Sankara's revolution, events following his assassination, and recent news relating to the political sphere, economic development (or lack thereof), human rights and justice matters in Burkina Faso. This was a very useful repository of a lot of information about Sankara and his government and speeches. This online information hub on Sankara and Burkina Faso is coordinated by Bruno Jaffrey, who is "a historian of the revolution of Burkina Faso (1983-1987); biographer of Thomas Sankara; ... a member of SURVIE, an organisation denouncing the franc Afrique; occasional journalist; ... author of five books on Sankara..." (Murrey, 2018: 364).

In line with the Afrocentric paradigm and Pan African ideology which theoretically and conceptually guided this study, in collecting and analysing data, part of the psycho-social procedures that I used throughout the entire fieldwork was what Archie Mafeje (2000) terms "endogeneity" in decolonial epistemologies. In further exploring the meaning of this concept, Chiumbu (2017: 3) explains that,

...it is a scholarship grounded in and driven by the affirmation of African experiences and an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions. We need to privilege perspectives, insights and knowledges flowing from African societies within the continent and in the diaspora, of course without necessarily throwing away progressive aspects of Euro-American epistemologies.

Therefore, in all the interviews, observations and participant research that I was engaged in during the fieldwork, the mantra and code word(s) in my head were "positionality" and "be grounded" in Africa so that I would not end up interacting and interpreting data through colonial and Eurocentric lenses. It would seem that the Endogeneity concept of Mafeje has some striking resemblance and similarities with Afrocentricity of Molefi Kete Asante as explored in the Theoretical Framework chapter.

Data-gathering instruments

Semi-structured interview guides (in English and French languages) were used to gather data to help interviewees elicit relevant information for the study. The semi-structured interview

schedules and probing by the researcher were performed without use of any leading questions so that responses given were just those of the respondents, raw as they were. Open-ended questions were posed to key informants in an unambiguous and professional manner. Telephone and computer aided instruments like Skype were used in conducting some of the interviews (two interviews to be specific). A computer was used when conducting virtual interviews via Skype and in sorting data after each day of interviews (audio recordings, images, videos, personal notes that I gathered during each day of field work from observations were all transferred to the laptop for safe storage).

Informed consent forms (See Appendix A and B for the English and French versions respectively) were also issued and explicitly explained to all interviewees before the interviews commenced. Permission to record interviews was always sought from participants before all interviews began, and for those who granted it, an audio recorder device was used to capture the interview process. I was fortunate that all my respondents and participants in the FGDs did not have any problem with recording of the proceedings. Therefore, an audio recorder was also used to record the voices. In addition, a high-resolution camera also formed part of the data gathering instruments to capture images and videos of events, places and people that I interacted with during the fieldwork. Ethics clearance letter/certificate (attached as Appendix C) also forms part of data gathering instruments as it was also presented to relevant bodies and individuals during data collection so that they would be confident that my research had been approved by my institution and that their rights would not be infringed during and after the interview. All relevant online resources and sites were used (see the previous section) to collect data, especially in reflecting on the work that has already been done in areas related to mine.

Data-analysis strategies

Data analysis can best be understood as “examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing, and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing raw and recorded data” (Neuman, 2011: 517). Documentary data analysis was used so that all documented data on the focus area of the study can be interrogated, compared and contrasted, that enabled me to have a clearer idea of the kind of knowledge that has already been produced and where the gaps may be. Documentary data analysis entails “locating, interpreting, systematically analysing and drawing conclusions about evidence presented through

documents on a relevant subject matter” (Fitzgerald, 2007: 279). This strategy is chosen because it is faster and cheaper to administer as most of the documentation used for analysis are sourced by the researcher through any means at his/her disposal, without incurring excessive costs. However, one of its shortfalls is that finding the right and relevant documents can sometimes be a daunting task as one has to sieve through a lot of information which may not be relevant, especially when using online platforms.

In analysing all documents and literature relevant for the study, the following analytic step-by-step systematic approach was followed, as outlined by (Fitzgerald, 2007: 287):

- Who wrote the document? What is known about the personal and professional biography of the author?
- When was this document written? What other events were occurring at the time?
- What prompted the writing of this document?
- What audience was this written for? Does this document set a particular agenda?
- What are the contents, the language and terms used and the key message(s)? What is ideological position of the author?
- What are the omissions? Was this deliberate? How do you know?
- Is this document reliable?

Thematic content analysis (TCA) was used to sort interviews data, literature, and archives (audio and visual recordings of Sankara’s speeches and documentaries). Recurring themes from all these data sources was collated and juxtaposed for interpretation in line with the epistemological lenses and theoretical orientation of the study. Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013: 400) define *content* analysis as “a systematic coding and categorizing approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information unobtrusively to determine trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication”. *Thematic* analysis refers to “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as cited in Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013: 400). It is important to note that Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (ibid) argue that content analysis and thematic analysis are different analytical methods, albeit their difference being very small to the extent that most researchers use them interchangeably. For the purposes of this study, I use the phrase “thematic content analysis” as an indication that I used both these analytic methods which enabled me to utilise strong attributes of each of them in my study. Anderson (2007: 1) broadly defines thematic content analysis as “a descriptive presentation of qualitative data”. Anderson (ibid) further adds that while conducting this

research analysis method, “the researcher groups and distils from the texts a list of common themes in order to give expression to the communality of voices across participants.” It is important to note that I did not use specific software or statistical package (beside excel) in identifying themes; I manually identified themes informed by literature, interviews, and Sankara’s speeches. Table 5.1 below shows the minute differences (and extensive similarities) between thematic analysis and content analysis. The main difference between the two is that in content analysis, the reporting style is more schematic and visual, which is ideal for quasi-quantitative studies.

Table 5.1: Data Analysis process in Thematic and Content Analysis

Analysis phases and their descriptions
<i>A: Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87)</i>
Familiarising with data
Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Generating initial codes
Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes
Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Reviewing themes
Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map.
Defining and naming themes
Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Producing the report
The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

<i>B: Content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008: 110)</i>
Preparation
Being immersed in the data and obtaining the sense of whole, selecting the unit of analysis, deciding on the analysis of manifest content or latent content.
Organising
Open coding and creating categories, grouping codes under higher order headings, formulating a general description of the research topic through generating categories and subcategories as abstracting.
Reporting
Reporting the analyses process and the results through models, conceptual systems, conceptual map or categories, and a story line.

Source: Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013: 402)

Criteria for Relevant Units and Themes in the Data

The building blocks of a well-executed thematic content analysis (TCA) are the ability to delineate relevant units/codes from the transcripts/data and thereafter extrapolating categories or themes from those codes. Simply put, units/codes and categories/themes are the building blocks for thematic content analysis in qualitative research. Anderson (2007: 2) makes it unequivocally clear that when undertaking TCA “criteria for ‘relevant’ descriptions should be included in [your] methods chapter”. I do this in Table 5.2 below. It is therefore important for parameters and criteria to be clearly outlined in the identification process of units and themes. Boyatzis (1998 cited in Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner, 2012: 231) states that there are five guidelines that inform a well-executed code sourcing in thematic content analysis, and those are: “a label or name; a definition of what a code concerns; a description of how to know when the coded theme occurs; a description of qualifications or exclusions to the identification of that code; and a listing of examples, *both positive and negative*, to avoid confusion of codes”. In the context of this study, a code such as, for instance, “food sovereignty” was found and labelled using the above guideline in this manner:

Table 5.2: Code formulation using Boyatzis (1998) guidelines*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

No.	Guidelines	Application in my study
1	Code name	food sovereignty
2	Definition of code	Production of enough food for all Burkinabe
3	When does this coded theme occur?	When each Burkinabe can have at least two meals per day
4	Criteria for inclusion or exclusion of the code	Does the theme directly speak to any of the research questions and/or objectives?
5	Examples (+ or -) to avoid confusion of codes	Majority of food produced in Burkina = (+) Majority of food produced outside of Burkina = (-)

Source: Author, using Boyatzis (1998) guidelines

DETAILED STEP-BY-STEP QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Background to Cross-Language Studies

There is often a confusion about the difference between translation and interpretation. From the outset, I outline different conceptualisations and definitions of both and then give a brief explanation of the small difference between the two. It is also important to note that some scholars use these two terms interchangeably. Neubert (1997: 4) briefly defines translation and interpretation alike as “bilingually mediated communication” and Bühler (2002 cited in Wong and Poon, 2010: 152) explains that “translation is not a neutral technique of replacing words of one language with words of another language. It involves assigning meanings to words in both languages and is mediated by power relations and social contexts”. Interpretation (in a research setting) is usually viewed as a process where communication from one language to the other is done verbally, often times simultaneously with an “interviewee” speaking an unknown language to the researcher. Temple and Edwards (2002: 2) further add that “translation and interpretation are not always the same, not least because the latter usually involves face-to-face interaction rather than working with written texts”.

It is therefore evident that translation and interpretation both need some set of linguistic, discipline, and cultural/societal insight because they are not merely about substituting of words of one language with words of another language that a researcher is proficient in. This, therefore, sheds some light about why I did not use computer aided translation software in translating my data from French to English. In support of this decision, Wong and Poon (2010: 151) reiterate that “it is also commonly, though incorrectly, assumed that the most significant differences between languages are their structures and sound systems—a misconception that has been reinforced by the recent development of computer translation software”

In an attempt to explain the relationship between the two concepts (translation and interpretation), Kvale (1996) indicates that translation is in fact a specific form of interpretation. That is, translation is a derivative/sub-set of interpretation, there language fluency between two languages is just a matter of interpretation as there cannot be an absolute truth in any translated work/data. Some studies acknowledge the role and “voice” of translators when writing their methodology and in reporting their findings (like Hammersley, 1995), while some do not, to such an extent that a reader would not even know that such a study was a cross-cultural/language research and participants in the study spoke a language completely alien to that of the researcher (like Khanum, 2001).

More cross-cultural/language research studies in recent years are beginning to acknowledge the crucial role that interpreters play in knowledge production and that they are not just ‘robotically’ and mechanically transmitting words from one language to the other, but that they are in fact involved in actual interpretation of words based on their class, culture, experience, educational level and their overall philosophical approach to life or the research topic itself (see MacKenzie, 2016; Temple and Young, 2004; Temple and Edwards, 2002). This study acknowledges the various roles played by interpreters during fieldwork in Ouagadougou and the translator (after fieldwork) in Pretoria, who painstakingly helped me translate and transcribe over twenty hours of interviews which culminated in 197 pages of transcribed data from French to English.

Wong and Poon (2010: 156), in explaining the active role of translators and in an attempt to “bring translation out of the shadows” asserts that “translators actively engage in interpretative activities beyond language exchange when they make decisions about how to ask questions or

what to probe during an interview”. They further make a case that “if we acknowledge the final product of translation as a distinct creation, then it is important for the research team to develop an understanding of what has been changed, gained, or lost through the process of translation” (ibid). Indeed, translators do not engage in a passive process of replacing words from one language to the other, I would argue that they may very well play a far more important role in shaping the interview process and in knowledge production during the interview process more than the actual researcher. Because of the centrality of interpreters and the translator in this study, they were constantly kept in the loop and I would ask them questions and vice-versa during and after the translation and transcription process. In addition, their suggestions about how to capture the key sentiments of participants were also considered during transcription and analysis.

I would not have done justice to the methodological and epistemological importance of translation in cross-cultural (mainly in terms of language) qualitative research if I do not refer the reader to one of the “fathers” of empowerment of African languages in literature and academia, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o who views translation as “a kind of dialogue or conversation among languages” and he argues that translation challenges the orthodoxy of hegemonic European languages in Africa like English and French (Wa Thiong’o, 2018: 128). In further adding to the literature on the importance of cultural nuances that translators ought to take into cognisance during translation, Wa Thiong’o states that,

Marketplaces of ideas were always the centres of knowledge and innovations. In his book, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire once said that culture contact was the oxygen of civilization. Translation, the universal language of languages, can really help in that generation of such oxygen [...] So, translation is inherent in all systems of communication (ibid: 131).

In this study, I concede that the translator was not just a translator, he played a far bigger role than meets the eye because, as Temple and Young (2004: 171) explain, “the translator always makes her mark on the research, whether this is acknowledged or not, and in effect some kind of ‘hybrid’ role emerges in that, at the very least, the translator makes assumptions about meaning equivalence that make her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator”.

In this paragraph, I spell out how the French interview schedule was developed and the process undertaken to ensure its rigour and reliability. From the English version of the interview schedule, three sets of the interview schedules in French were developed, using different people. The first two were developed by Burkinabe’s of different educational and class level.

One, who was my research assistant/interpreter had a university degree and was doing menial jobs to make ends meet in Ouagadougou. The other was done by a fellow PhD candidate with a linguistic background and much proficient in both these languages. The last version was done by a professional sworn translator who is a lecturer (from Cameroon) at one of the highly ranked South African Universities, who has a doctoral degree in Law. This last translation was done after comparing and contrasting the first two translations and then formulating the last version which was then used during fieldwork (data collection). See these three French versions of the interview schedule and the fourth English version in appendices.

A lot of literature (see MacKenzie, 2016) encourages use of “forward-backward translation” as a way of ensuring that crucial data is not lost through the cracks during translation. “Forward-backward translation” entails “having the written English (*read as any language*) interview questions translated into the other language by one interpreter and then translated back into English by another interpreter, thereby highlighting discrepancies, inappropriate language usage and ambiguous interpretations of the questions” (ibid:169). My research schedule could have benefited from this approach, but unfortunately, I could not do it due to lack of adequate resources and time (at the time). However, in-state of “forward-backward translation”, I did what I would term the 'monolingual forward X 3 translation' as described above. That is, getting three different translations (in this case from English to French) from three people. It is important to note that all three translators are reasonably well proficient in both languages, French and English, even though they know more French than English due to them growing up and learning in French in their respective countries (Francophone), until they learned English in the latter years of their academic lives.

Translation, Transcription, and Developing of Themes

Following collection of raw data (in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso) through interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) which were all, but three, conducted in French, I began a search for a professional translator in Gauteng province, South Africa. The translator was sought in and around Pretoria and Johannesburg cities so that I would have easy access to him during the translation process for sharing notes and information about each audio recorded interview. This process took some time as I wanted to ensure that I did not get any layperson who claimed they could speak French and English, for the reasons articulated in the preceding section. An “orientation workshop” was setup with the translator once I had done the necessary

due diligence that he was suitably qualified to undertake the translation such that the translated data would be as trustworthy as possible. Prior to this workshop, I shared my research proposal and some additional material for him to read so that he would have a fair comprehension of what the study aims, objectives, and questions were, before he could begin the work. I then addressed all the questions and methodological concerns he had about the audio recordings and the study in its entirety during the workshop which took approximately two hours. We kept in contact throughout the entire translation and transcription process which took about four to five months because the translator also had other commitments (teaching and research) at the university. It is important to note that both the translation and transcription were concurrently done by the same person.

Once the transcription and translation process were done, we set for another meeting with the translator where he briefed me about how he went about the process and how he dealt with ambiguous phrases and words that were used locally by the interviewees which had slightly different meaning from how they would be used in formal French language. The same way there is pigeon English in countries like Nigeria, for instance, the translator mentioned that there were some interviewees who used the pigeon English equivalent of French that is used in Francophone West Africa. Fortunately, the translator knew this “informal” French and he was able to translate it without many hurdles to English. Overall, 197 pages of transcripts were compiled and from this I distilled forty-one pages of preliminary codes during thematic analysis of the transcripts. I read all fourteen transcripts at least three times before teasing out preliminary codes. The baseline or litmus test throughout this process of codes formulation was reading through all the five research questions, five research objectives and the research problem so that it was clear in my mind what questions I was seeking to answer from the inputs of the participants.

From the preliminary phase of codes formulation, 1196 codes were extracted from the data and these were subsequently narrowed down to 300 codes, which were further reduced to 84 sub-themes or categories, and lastly 10 themes were ultimately compiled. In thematically searching for these codes and themes, the following key words/phrases (distilled from research questions and objectives) were used as guiding analytical tools:

- Sankara’s leadership traits;
- Governance strategies;

- Pan Africanism/African Unity;
- African Renaissance;
- Development programs/approaches;
- Democratic and popular revolution;
- Sankara's philosophy and legacy;
- August 1983 revolution; and
- Lessons for socio-economic development.

Many codes that were identified in individual interviews had some resemblance and a process of collapsing codes that were the same into one was undertaken. This was a key approach that helped in narrowing down of many codes as some respondents would have shared similar sentiments around certain questions. Beside this, other codes that were systematically excluded during the thematic analysis were those that did not have a direct bearing at addressing any of the research questions and research problem.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

METHODOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN COLLECTING AND ANALYSING QUANTITATIVE DATA

In order to quantify important words or phrases that carry significant meaning that help answer research questions and meet objectives of the study, four categories of themes emanating from the initial (preliminary) thematic analysis of qualitative data (during concurrent data analysis) and from the literature, were selected. These four categories are:

- Pan Africanism (coded "P-A");
- Revolution (coded "Rev.")
- Endogenous Development (coded "E-D");
- Sankarism (coded "SKM").

Thereafter, each of these categories were assigned seven keywords or sub-themes that were deemed to be relevant and related to each category. For instance, the category named Sankarism (which was operationally conceptualised to mean philosophy, ideology, and governance approach of Thomas Sankara) was assigned the following seven keywords:

- Self-negation/Servant leadership
- Incorruptible/ility
- Participatory governance
- Pragmatism
- Implementation
- Discipline/Principle/d
- Women emancipation

The same approach was used for the other three categories as shall be seen in the excel spreadsheet (Appendix F). Once the quantification process was outlined, data through which quantification of these words would be extracted from was carefully chosen after a thorough review of a wide-ranging literature on Sankara's governance and development efforts through his revolutionary experiment of 1983-1987. I purposefully sampled what I deemed to be four of Sankara's most important speeches and interviews during his tenure as President of Burkina Faso, and randomly sampled four publications from the literature about him and his presidency. Two of these publications were journal articles and another two were book chapters. In total, quantitative data was sourced from eight publications/data sources.

Half of these publications were Sankara's speeches and interviews because it was important that Sankara's voice (albeit posthumously) should be heard and elevated more than what other people wrote about him and perceived his ideals to be. This way, I was able to directly "communicate" with Sankara through his own words and this permitted me to hear, from the "horse's mouth", so to speak, what plans, programmes, visions and development policies he had for Burkina Faso. The other four publications were split in half into journal articles and book chapters because this permitted me to cast the net as far as possible in the literature. Using, for instance, books/chapters only as literature publications would have limited my data to one form of publication avenue and perhaps this would not have the same academic rigour and versatility as I wanted.

The following Sankara speeches were sampled for quantitative analysis:

1. "The Political Orientation Speech"
2. "Freedom Must be Conquered"
3. "Dare to Invent the Future"
4. "The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women"

The following journal articles and book chapters were sampled:

1. "Military Coup, Popular Revolutions or Militarised Revolution?" (De-Valera & Traore, 2018)
2. "Africa's Sankara: On Pan African Leadership" (Amber Murrey, 2018)
3. "Ideology and Praxis in Sankara's Populist Revolution" (Guy Martin, 1987)
4. "The Legacies of Thomas Sankara – A Revolutionary Experience in Retrospect" (Ernest Harsch, 2013)

For each of these eight publications, I read each individual word, sentence, paragraph, and page at least three times. The first time to acquaint myself with the content of the publication, the second and third time to take notes by circling or underlining keywords that directly spoke to the identified keywords or sub-themes in each category. It is important to note that not only was I looking for "hits" or frequency-use and appearance of specific keywords as they appear under each category, I also underlined synonymous words/phrases which had the same meaning with the keywords in question. Even if different words were used but those words/phrases carried the same meaning and weight as the "guiding keywords" as illustrated above, they would be noted as hits.

For instance, instead of merely taking note of the phrase "women emancipation" as is, I would also add to the same "basket" words like "women freedom/s", "women advocacy", "female upliftment", "gender equality/inequality", etc. Furthermore, keywords that had the opposite meaning (antonyms) such as "women subjugation" were also noted and counted as "hits" to be added in the basket of the guiding keyword "women emancipation". This was done because all that I wanted to analyse was the frequency (quantitatively) with which certain words/phrases (and the overall ideas on the same subject of women in this case) were used by Sankara himself in his speeches and by scholars in the literature who wrote about the "Sankara phenomenon". The more certain words were used symbolised, to some extent, how much the speaker or author valued certain issues over others.

Hits or frequency markers (in the form of 11111, 11111, bundled in five, each "1" standing for one hit of that keyword) were done for all data sets (that is, speeches, journal articles, and book chapters). Zero ("0") was assigned for keywords which did not get any hits at all from each data set. A table for all eight data sets indicating the four categories and their seven keywords

were populated based on the number of times each word appeared. This was first done on Microsoft Word tables and then the data was transposed to Microsoft Excel for more manipulation of the numbers. On the Excel Spreadsheet, three more columns were added, in addition to the column of the seven keywords/sub-themes. These are frequency, ranking, and percentage frequency.

Once each category table for all the eight data sets were populated, they were then aggregated under the two titles: ‘Quantification Coding: Sankara Speeches and Interviews’ and ‘Quantification Coding: Literature on Sankara (books and journals)’. This process culminated into eight tables (from the initial 32 tables before aggregation), four from each category for both speeches and literature quantification coding (see tables 5.2 to 5.9 in Chapter Five and quantification coding, Appendix F for more clarity). 32 tables were derived because for each of the four categories (P-A, Rev., E-D, and SKM), 8 tables were extracted, emanating from the 8 data-sets of speeches and literature. Lastly, comparative ranking of the two categories with the highest percentage ranking (from the speeches and literature) was done and this resulted in two tables of “Revolution” and “Sankarism” which got the most hits and therefore gained the highest percentage frequency. Using the eight aggregated quantification coding tables, graphs, histograms, and pie-charts were drawn for an easy to understand visual depiction of the quantitative results. For more background on this quasi-quantitative analysis of data of this nature (interviews, speeches, and books), refer to Peter Häussler’s (2017: 152-166) doctoral thesis titled, *‘Leadership in Africa: A hermeneutic dialogue with Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere on equality and human development’*.

Ways to Ensure Validity and Reliability

Authenticity of results of the study was prioritised and given utmost attention. For a research study of this magnitude to generate knowledge and undergo and pass due level of academic rigour, it should present valid and reliable results. Joppe (2002, cited in Golafshani, 2003: 599) defines validity as a mechanism which “determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit ‘the bull’s eye’ of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others”.

While this definition was formulated in the context of a quantitative research approach, it can also be applied in qualitative research methods, because its application can be contextualised and customised for different research designs. Two types of validity measures to ensure trustworthiness of results are; internal and external validity. According to Shenton (2004), internal validity narrative speaks to the question of credibility of the research and its findings. Put differently, it seeks to ensure that the study actually measures or explores what it said it would measure. External validity on the contrary refers to the “transferability” or generalisability of research results in different contexts (Merriam, 1998).

Joppe (ibid) defines reliability as “the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable”. Trustworthiness of the study was ensured by acknowledging and mentioning my own subjective bias as a researcher (reflexivity) which may be subconscious and therefore negatively affect my interpretation of data and results. Being cognisant of this reflexivity bias that all researchers are prone to in conducting any kind of research, but more so qualitative research, I took conscious steps and effort to ensure that in line with all ethics rules of the University, I, at all times, reported and interpreted my results in a professional and objective manner, based on the actual data sources. Furthermore, research instruments were piloted so that by the time they were used in the field, they were strengthened from the feedback I received during the pilot phase of the study.

Ethical Considerations

University code of conduct for all researchers were adhered to throughout the study. Part two of UNISA’s Policy on Research Ethics titled, ‘*Guidelines for research involving human participants*’, was carefully read and adhered to at all times. More details on other ethical considerations at UNISA are available here: http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/colleges/col_agriculture_environsciences/docs/CAESPolicy_on_Research_Ethics.pdf. In addition, consent forms were shared with all interviewees so that they were aware of basic issues such as the right to withdraw from the study if they felt that they no longer wanted to continue. Also, the recording of interviewees was done entirely at their discretion. Anonymity and complete privacy of all participants in the study was strictly observed so that the confidentiality agreement stipulated in the consent form was not

compromised and rendered null and void. Research ethics principles such as honesty and integrity in gathering data, reporting data, results, and outlining of methods and procedures used, were adhered to.

Objectivity in conducting interviews and in analysing data was also one of the key ethical principles I observed together with respecting intellectual property of other people by ensuring that I referenced all ideas that do not belong to me throughout the write up of this thesis. This was done to guard against one of the gravest “sins” in academia, which is plagiarism. I explained to participants that there were no monetary incentives for participating in the research and that there was also not foreseeable potential harm (non-maleficence) they could incur by their participation in the study (Depart of Health, Republic of South Africa, 2015). Another moral principle in ethics of beneficence was also considered. Beneficence refers to the ethical principle that research should, ideally, lead to and maximise a positive contribution and benefit to those who participate in it and to the general wellbeing of society as a whole (Depart of Health, Republic of South Africa, 2015).

All raw data, either in the form of audio recordings, videos, images, transcriptions, etc, was kept in a safe password protected computer and in password-secured external hard drive. This was to ensure that I am the only person with access to information that could potentially be risky so as to ensure absolute confidentiality of the information shared by participants and their identities. Justice principle which means that ‘there should be a fair balance of risks and benefits amongst all role players involved in research including participants [themselves] and participating communities’ (Depart of Health, Republic of South Africa, 2015: 14). Research participants’ dignity, rights and autonomy were further observed and respected as required by the ethical principle of autonomy (Emmanuel et al, 2000). The following review standards, according to Emmanuel et al (2000) makes ethical research: social or scientific value, scientific validity, fair subject selection, favourable risk-benefit ratio, independent review, informed consent, and respect for potential and enrolled participants.

Conclusion

This Methodology chapter has described how the research study was undertaken and what tools were employed in data collection and who the target participants were, how they were sourced and where they were interviewed. The study used a mixed method research approach which, in short, is a combination of the widely known and orthodox qualitative and quantitative

research approaches. This chapter is very important because it gives the reader a detailed step-by-step description and narration of the how, why, where, when, and who of the entire research process from conception to reporting of findings. A case for why Mixed Methods Research was opted for is made. It was used because it emphasises the importance of not only using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in gathering, analysing data and reporting findings, but it also stresses the importance of integration of data such that the sum result offers more details and results are more trustworthy than when just one research approach was used.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents results from quantitative data and findings from qualitative data, beginning with the former. The summation of the research problem, which influenced the research questions and objectives of the study, is that ‘accountable governance and development continue to be a challenge in Africa even when we have noble, principled steadfast leaders such as Sankara and those who came before him in Africa and in the diaspora.’ By accountable governance, I mean ethical and principled administration of state affairs, crafting of developmentally responsive public policies and delivering of public goods to society by elected public representatives and civil servants in government. Development in this case implies improvement in wellbeing of society across different human development indicators. Therefore, the following key research question and objectives (as outlined in the first chapter) are answered in this chapter:

The Main research question is:

What leadership traits and governance strategies could Africans learn from Sankara’s revolutionary government to advance African unity and renaissance?

Research objectives of the study are:

- To explore governance philosophies of Thomas Sankara and his Pan African ideals
- To put into perspective Burkina Faso’s popular revolution of 1983
- To describe Sankara’s leadership qualities and organisational capabilities
- To distil lessons for socio-economic development from the Sankara administration of 1983-1987.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

This section presents results emanating from the quantification process as explained in the Methodology chapter, based on these four categories: Pan Africanism, Revolution, Endogenous Development, and lastly Sankarism. Each of these categories had seven keywords or sub-themes which were descriptive of their category, and 50% of data was drawn from Thomas Sankara's speeches and one interview while the other 50% was derived from literature on what scholars have written about Sankara and the Burkina Faso revolution. The speeches and interviews of Sankara listed in Table 6.1 were utilised. The selection criteria are explained below this table.

Table 6.1: List of speeches, interviews and literature on Sankara

No.	Sampled Sources of Quantified Data	Codes
	Speeches and Interviews:	
No.1	The Political Orientation Speech: Building a New Society, Rid of Social Injustice and Imperialist Domination (Sankara, October 1983)	Sp.
No.2	Freedom Must be Conquered (Sankara, 1984)	Sp.
No.3	Dare to Invent the Future (Interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, 1985)	Int.
No.4	The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women (Sankara, March 1987)	Sp.
	Literature (book chapters and journals):	
No.5	Military Coup, Popular Revolutions or Militarised Revolution? Contextualising the Revolutionary Ideological Courses of Thomas Sankara and the National Council of the Revolution (Botchway & Traore, 2018)	BC.
No.6	Africa's Sankara: On Pan African Leadership (Amber Murrey, 2018)	BC.
No.7	Ideology and Praxis in Sankara's Populist Revolution (Guy Martin, 1987)	Jrn.
No.8	The Legacies of Thomas Sankara – A Revolutionary Experience in Retrospect (Ernest Harsch, 2013)	Jrn.

Codes: Speech = **Sp.**, Interview = **Int.**, Book Chapter = **BC.**, Journal Paper = **Jrn.**

Source: Author

Sampling of three speeches by Sankara was done purposefully and the reason was for Sankara's own voice to be heard and made more prominent in this study. This allowed for his voice to be more audible in the midst of many contending voices about who Sankara was and what his revolutionary project was about and what it sought to achieve. This way, his ideas and philosophies could not be compromised as his speeches resemble his raw words and thoughts which are not censored or sanitised by any third party.

Selection Criteria of Speeches, Interviews, and Literature

"The Political Orientation Speech" was sampled because it was the blueprint of the "program of action" of the new revolutionary government. This speech was presented by Thomas Sankara on behalf of the National Council of the Revolution, on radio and television on 02 October 1983 in Ouagadougou. In brief, the speech details how and why the August revolution came about, it gives a historiography of the 23 years of neo-colonial in Burkina since independence, and it further explains various institutions like CDRs that will form part of the new government nuts and bolts.

"Freedom must be conquered", a speech delivered at the 39th United Nations General Assembly session in New York on 4 October 1984, was Sankara's maiden speech at the UN. The speech introduced him and his revolutionary anti-imperialist ideas to the world. This speech was important, hence it was sampled, because it is through it that Sankara unequivocally told the world powers that his only aspiration was two-fold: "first, to be able to speak on behalf of my people, the people of Burkina Faso, in simple words, words that are clear and factual. And second, in my own way to also speak on behalf of the 'great disinherited people of the world...ironically christened the Third World'" (Sankara, 2016: 132).

"Dare to Invent the Future", Sankara's only interview sampled for this study, was very important to include because it is in this interview in 1985, with Jean-Philippe Rapp, a Swiss journalist, that Sankara drove home one strong message that for one to make an indelible mark in life, they must dare to do things differently and be creative and unorthodox in their praxis. This is what the Burkina Faso revolution was premised on, doing things differently by breaking with the past neo-colonial ways of governing. Therefore, a thorough understanding of what it is that Sankara did in daring to imagine and create a new future and society for Burkina is crucial in addressing some of the objectives of this study.

The third speech, ‘The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women’, was delivered on 8 March 1987 in Ouagadougou during an International Women’s Day rally where thousands of women from across Burkina Faso were in attendance. The significance of this speech, which explains its inclusion in the sample, is because it reveals how Sankara was immensely invested and dedicated to issues of women emancipation. He was one of the leading Presidents globally to prioritise women in all his government’s programmes, and this is evidenced by the fact that policies relating to women emancipation came second after the national army question. Transformative economic development came third (Sankara, 2016). Furthermore, explaining the significance of women in the revolution, Sankara insisted that “the authenticity and future of our revolution depend on women” (ibid: 260).

The chapter, “Military Coup, Popular Revolutions or Militarised Revolution?” by Botchway and Traore (2018), is quite critical of the August 1983 Burkina Faso revolution, and about Sankara himself, arguing that what happened was a “pseudo-revolution” and a coup d’etat. These dissenting views are important for this study so that it does not seem like an uncritical praise song for Sankara, which enabled the flaws of the revolution to be articulated and acknowledged.

Murrey’s (2018) ‘Africa’s Sankara: On Pan African Leadership’ is a book chapter that sought to challenge and problematise the popular narrative of Sankara being affectionately called “Africa’s Che Guevara”. Murrey (ibid: 77) argues that Sankara is an outstanding leader in his right and his legacy can be used to counter the narrative and trend about the “widely proliferated and untroubled idea that there is a leadership crisis” in Africa. In addition, Murrey (ibid) deals with the two relevant concepts for my study: Leadership and Pan Africanism. The chapter is also significant in that it is a recent publication.

The first of the two journal papers is, “Ideology and Praxis in Sankara’s Populist Revolution” by Guy Martin (1987), which was published the same year that Sankara was assassinated. Martin writes extensively about Sankara, and the timing of the publication of the article made it important for this study because it meant that the writer wrote the article when Sankara’s policies and governance strategies were at their peak. This is crucial because time and space in empirical scholarship are of utmost importance in better capturing certain phenomenon. In short, this article sought to appraise the gains and losses of the Burkina revolution and account for its relative longevity. Martin (ibid) argues that analyses of this revolution should not depart

from ideological purity and historical precedents orientation, but rather based on its own set objectives and aims.

“The Legacies of Thomas Sankara – A Revolutionary Experience in Retrospect” is the last journal paper by Ernest Harsch (2013), a fervent scholar on Burkina Faso’s politics, who also writes extensively on the Burkina Faso revolution and got to interview Sankara a number of times. His article was selected because it specifically deals with and maps the legacies of Sankara which is important because the last research sub-question of this study seeks to explore how legacies of great African leaders such as Sankara could be used to inform current African leaders for Africa’s renewal. Therefore, this article spoke directly to the objectives of the study, hence its selection.

Results from the selected data-sets above

Table 6.2: Pan Africanism(speeches)

Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency Distribution
Imperialism/anti-imperialism	79	1	37,3%
Culture	47	2	22,2%
Colonialism/anti-/neo-colonialism	43	3	20,3%
National(ism)	38	4	17,9%
Renaissance	4	5	1,9%
Africa(n) unity	1	6	0,5%
Pan African(ism)	0	7	0,0%
Sub-total	212		100,0%

*Refer to the methodology section (under Quantitative Research Approach) for a detailed recap description of how this table and others in this chapter were formulated and derived at.

Table 6.2 under the category of Pan Africanism depicts aggregated results from three of Sankara’s speeches and one interview as indicated in Table 6.1. In other words, the seven keywords or sub-themes in this table were sourced from each of the four speeches and interviews and then a summation of each of the “hits” or appearance of the seven sub-themes was made which appears under the column “Frequency”. The next column “Ranking” shows the sub-themes in order, from the one that got the highest hits to the least hits. The last column which is percentage frequency of the sub-themes merely shows in per centage form and order, the sub-themes percentages as per their frequency/hits.

The keyword imperialism or anti-imperialism got the highest hits (79 times) in the four speeches and interview and scored the highest per centage frequency of almost forty per cent (37.3%). This was not surprising considering that Sankara made a name for himself international as a staunch anti-imperialist and at the heart of his government's foreign policy was support for countries that were still under the imperialist yoke globally, with more focus on the Global South. This would explain why he was famously quoted as saying that "imperialism is in the food you are eating and the clothes you are wearing" when asked what imperialism was. The second highest issues that pre-occupied Sankara under this category were culture and (anti)colonialism or neo-colonialism, which appeared 47 and 43 times respectively. Sankara strongly believed in the cultural renaissance of Burkinabe and Africans at large, and there were numerous instances where he made this clear. For instance, using his government's mantra of "produce what you consume and consume what your produce", he encouraged all civil servant to wear Burkina Faso produced clothes. As such, a locally produced and culturally accepted costume called the "Faso dan Fani" was worn as a symbol for this. In addition, he built a culture preserving centre called SIAO in Ouagadougou where all forms of arts could be practiced. Colonialism or neo-colonialism was abhorred much like imperialism by Sankara, which is why this keyword had a considerably high appearance in his speeches.

The last three keywords; Renaissance, African unity, and Pan Africanism did not appear so much in Sankara's speeches and this could be for a number of reasons. Some among them being that certain terms like African Renaissance would in the 1980s not have been as widely used as in the 1990s and 2000s. Furthermore, in as much as Cheikh Anta Diop and others (later) were already using the term as early as the 1940s, it only gained more widespread usage much later after its reinvigoration and popularisation by people like Thabo Mbeki. What seems to be an outlier in Table 5.2 is that the keyword "Pan Africanism" which is also a category, scored a zero percent frequency in Sankara's speeches that were sampled, meaning that he never used that term at all in the sampled speeches. This is an anomaly because Sankara is widely acknowledged as a fierce Pan Africanist, yet in his speeches he does not seem to use the very term that is often used to describe him. Why could this be so?

It could be that as a person who generally avoided as much as possible to be seen as ascribing to certain ideologies or concepts (because he was a non-conformist and unorthodox), he consciously decided not to use that term as is. Perhaps this was to avoid being labelled and pre-empted by being called a "Pan-Africanist", the same way he did not want to be labelled a Marxist or communist, for instance, even though he borrowed a lot from these ideologies.

Secondly, it might be because African nationalism was viewed by some as the other side of the coin (i.e., Pan-Africanism). That is, he may have viewed Pan Africanism and (African) Nationalism as two sides of the same coin, hence Table 6.2 shows that the keyword “nationalism” was used much more than Pan Africanism, getting 38 hits (frequency), which translates to almost 18% frequency distribution.

Table 6.3: Pan Africanism (Literature)

Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Imperialism/anti-imperialism	50	1	26,6%
National(ism)	43	2	22,9%
Culture	41	3	21,8%
Colonialism/anti-colonialism	33	4	17,6%
Pan African(ism)	16	5	8,5%
Africa(n) unity	4	6	2,1%
Renaissance	1	7	0,5%
Sub-total	188		100,0%

There are two main distinct results emanating from Table 6.3, more so when juxtaposing it with Table 6.2. The first and most glaring aspect worth noting is that the sub-theme “imperialism” continues to rank first in this table and the previous one. However, there is a stark difference pertaining to the frequency with which this sub-theme was invoked by Sankara himself compared to scholars in the literature. Through his speeches and interviews, Sankara, as depicted in the previous table, uses the term “imperialism/anti-imperialism” 79 times, whereas in the other literature, this term is made reference to only 50 times as seen in Table 5.3. I would argue that the large difference (of almost 30 hits) in the use of the term “imperialism” by Sankara and scholars in the literature, implies that Sankara was gravely concerned about the effects of imperialism in Burkina Faso and Africa, and that many of his efforts sought to undo these pervasive effects of imperial domination of Africa, even post-colonial era.

The second important result is that the sub-theme “Pan-Africanism” garnered 16 hits from the literature while Sankara, in his speeches (from the sampled ones), did not use this term, not even once, as evidenced in Table 6.2. He might have used that term a few times in other speeches or interviews that were not included in this sample, but even if he did, chances are that it was not a lot considering that the sampled speeches here are some of his most important

and elaborate ones. This could be explained by the fact that Sankara was not necessarily an ideologue, and he did not systematically write down his philosophical inclinations and political ideas, in spite of the fact that he used the term “nationalism” a number of times. In addition, scholars used this term more than Sankara perhaps because in their analysis (in hindsight and post Sankara’s death), they deemed his policies, programmes and initiatives in Burkina Faso and internationally (in his foreign policy) as Pan Africanist, while he was just concerned about the wellbeing of the Burkinabe, Africans in the diaspora and the oppressed in general. Theoreticians, academics and scholars use theoretical concepts and ideologies to understand societal challenges and to propose solutions. Because Pan Africanism is also an ideology, it makes sense that scholars through the literature sampled in this study, used the term “Pan-Africanism” more than Sankara did. Furthermore, this can also be explained by the fact that Sankara devoted more of his time and energy on praxis than theory (or ideologies). Martin (1987: 87) concurs with this analysis when he argues that,

In their courageous and resolute struggle for the betterment of the condition of their masses, the Burkinabe leaders certainly deserve the full cooperation and support of all the states and governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the world, regardless of political and ideological inclinations and preferences. For once, the fight against poverty, disease and ignorance should take precedence over political and ideological considerations. As President Sankara himself succinctly puts it: "We seek human dignity; that is our ideology."³⁹

This extract shows that Sankara was not married to any ideology, but he was married to preserving the dignity of his people by ending poverty and subjugation of the Burkinabe.

Table 6.4: Revolution (speeches)

Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution(ary)	296	1	59,9%
Democratic and popular revolution	58	2	11,7%
Freedom/independence	53	3	10,7%
Peasants	47	4	9,5%
Coup de'tat/military	21	5	4,3%
Decolonise(ation)	15	6	3,0%

³⁹ Note that this article was written and published before Sankara was assassinated, hence it speaks of “Burkina leaders...” of the time, during Sankara’s Presidency.

Authoritarian(ism)	4	7	0,8%
Sub-total	494		100,0%

One of the most abused words in contemporary political circles, especially among those who claim to be radical and in the left of the political spectrum, is revolution and or revolutionary. The unintended consequence of this is that the meaning of revolution has eventually been tainted or misunderstood by many youths in Africa. Sankara, who is not only dubbed a revolutionary, but also proclaimed himself as one, is evidenced by the fact that soon after they seized power in August 1983, they named their organisation the National Council of the Revolution (CNR), and many of the institutions of their government had the word “revolution” as part of their description. Some of these institutions include, Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, Revolutionary Popular Tribunals, Revolutionary Provincial Executives, Revolutionary Banking Union, etc. It is against this background that it is not surprising the sub-theme “revolution” appears close to three hundred times (296) in Sankara’s sampled speeches, thereby yielding the highest per centage frequency of almost sixty per cent (59.9%) of all the sub-themes in this “revolution” category. Indeed, Sankara was a fierce revolutionary par excellence who stood head and shoulders with his peers, those who came before him and those of his era.

The jury is still out about whether the 04 August 1983 moment when Sankara took over as the President of Burkina Faso constituted a revolution in a classical sense, or not (see Harsch, 2013; Tilly, 1978, 1995). Sankara believed in the authenticity and contextual relevance of his revolution in Burkina Faso to the point where, it is reported, that he defied Muammar Qaddafi when he tried to coerce him to “copy” his governance approach in Libya. Sankara’s response to Qaddafi was “we are not exactly political virgins. Your experience interests us, but we want to live our own” (Adriamirado, 1987: 58). Democratic and Popular Revolution sub-theme rank second at only 11.7% frequency because Sankara was always at pains to explain and clarify that theirs was a revolution, not a military coup as alleged by some, because it had massive popular support from the poor working class and peasants, thereby giving it a democratic character. Authoritarianism sub-theme scored the least per centage frequency of 0.8% (four hits) because his regime was not authoritarian. Even if it was, he would not ‘incriminate’ himself by openly calling himself a dictator/authoritarian.

Table 6.5: Revolution (literature)

Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution(ary)	396	1	64,1%
Coup de' tat/military	122	2	19,7%
Freedom/independence	49	3	7,9%
Democratic and popular revolution	24	4	3,9%
Peasants	14	5	2,3%
Authoritarian(ism)	9	6	1,5%
Decolonise(ation)	4	7	0,6%
Sub-total	618		100,0%

The outstanding results revealed in Table 6.5 are from the keyword “revolution” or “revolutionary” because it scored a lot of hits (396) which translates to 64.1% of all the hits in this category from the book chapters and journal articles (literature). What makes these results worth noting is because the same keyword when quantified in Sankara’s speeches (Table 6.4), scored 100 less hits (296). This outcome seems to be an outlier in that the trend from previous tables figures seemed to be suggesting that certain sub-themes and descriptions of Sankara and his revolutionary experiment in Burkina Faso were invoked with higher frequency by Sankara himself in his speeches more than by those who write about him (literature) and the Burkina Faso revolution. However, this table found different results by quite a large margin (100 hits), which is intriguing. The reason for this, it seems, is that the scholars are quite fascinated by what I would term “the Sankara effect” from the beginning of the Burkina Faso revolution in 04 August 1983 right through the 15 October 1987 when he was assassinated.

In as much as the debate about the accurate description of this period (1983-1987) in Burkina Faso rages on, with some conceding that it was a revolution (with special characteristics) and some adamant that it was a military coup (even though there is overwhelming evidence that the government structure was hybrid, with civilians and soldiers), what is widely acknowledged is that Sankara’s presidency forever changed the political and economic landscape of Burkina Faso. Ernest Harsch (2013: 361) further adds that “The CNR⁴⁰ and cabinet were hybrid military – civilian formations, although the greatest influence was wielded by Sankara, Compaore,

⁴⁰ National Council of the Revolution, which was the ruling organisation which was the overarching body that consolidated all governance in Burkina Faso, and other government institutions in the revolution were under this movement/organisation.

Captain Henri Zongo, and Commander Jean-Baptiste Lingani, the four ‘historic’ leaders of the August 1983 seizure of power”. This complex nature of the Sankara effect, its contradictions and achievements in such a short space of time may very well account for the high frequency with which the keyword “revolution” is used by scholars, in describing Sankara’s government and governance. It seems that wittingly or unwittingly, those who write about Sankara have largely succumbed to referring to his time in power as revolutionary because no administration, it is arguable, before and after Sankara’s administration has achieved what Sankara achieved in just four years in Burkina Faso.

The fact that the keyword(s) ‘Coup de’ tat/military’ comes second in Table 6.5 at close to 20% frequency is indicative and supportive of the argument I make here that the literature is still grappling with defining the August 1983 moment when Sankara took over power, as either a revolution or military takeover/coup. This is why coup ranks second in the keywords with the most hits in the literature. Lastly, democratic and popular revolution sub-theme ranks fourth with 24 hits at 3.9% frequency which is much significantly lower than its performance in the same category under speeches. In Table 6.4, this sub-theme ranks second at 11.7%, which is almost three times its ranking in this table because many scholars do not seem to be convinced that Sankara’s government, due to its militant, radical and revolutionary posture, was democratic and as popular as claimed by its leaders and Sankara himself. Therefore, they used this sub-theme sparingly.

Table 6.6: Endogenous Development⁴¹ (speeches)

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Aid/Debt	36	1	36,4%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	16	2	16,2%
Food self-sufficiency	16	2	16,2%
Economic self-reliance	10	3	10,1%
Industrialisation/ED	9	4	9,1%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	6	5	6,1%
Austerity	6	5	6,1%
Sub-total	99		100,0%

⁴¹ For more information on this concept, see the findings and discussions of theme three later, under the section titled ‘Endogenous Development Strategy’.

As Sankara had long come to the conclusion that there is never a “free lunch”, he thus often said that he who feeds you controls you and that the hand that never fed you will never ask anything of you, to paraphrase him (Sankara, 2016). This is why he was very critical and cautious about the so-called humanitarian aid and loans that many African countries are enticed with by their former colonisers and international institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The aid-debt sub-theme in Table 6.6 received 36 hits and translating to 36.4% per centage frequency, making it to rank first among other sub-themes in this endogenous development category. Its per centage frequency more than doubles those of the two sub-themes that rank second and third in this table, indicating that the issue of debt and loans enjoyed special focus from Sankara, which speaks to their significance, in his view, in shaping or crippling the economy of Burkina.

On debt, during his address at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Twenty-fifth Conference of Member States in Addis Ababa on 27 July 1987, Sankara gave a well-thought out and historically nuanced analysis and case for why Africa’s debt to the West (its former coloniser) should not be paid. He contended that a comprehensive analysis and account of the debt history should begin with tracing the root causes of such debt because “those who lend us the money were those who colonised us” (Sankara, 2016: 303). He further added that “the debt is another form of neo-colonialism, one in which the colonialists have transformed themselves into technical assistants. Actually, it would be more accurate to say technical assassins” (ibid:303). These words by Sankara show how passionate he was about the debilitating effects of aid on African economies. In what has become a relatively famous quotation from Sankara on debt, he proclaimed that “the debt in its present form is a cleverly organised reconquest of Africa.... It is a reconquest that turns each of us into a financial slave – or just a plain slave” (ibid: 303).

On the thorny issue of aid, in all its disguises, Sankara (ibid) was of the view that Burkina Faso would only accept aid that sought to end more aid because they did not want to be a beggar nation, as is the case with many African countries today. The last two ranking sub-themes (produce-consume Burkinabe and austerity) were the least mentioned in Sankara’s sampled speeches, which is ironic because “produce-consume Burkinabe” was the mantra of his revolution and his government devoted a lot of attention on cost-cutting measures for inward-looking developmental purposes. Perhaps austerity was not the actual word that Sankara used in articulating their efforts of tightening the belt and spending wisely.

Table 6.7: Endogenous Development (literature)

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Economic self-reliance	12	1	22,6%
Food self-sufficiency	9	2	17,0%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	9	2	17,0%
Austerity	9	2	17,0%
Aid/Debt	7	3	13,2%
Industrialisation/ED	5	4	9,4%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	2	5	3,8%
Sub-total	53		100,0%

Worth noting from this category in the literature is that the sub-total of the frequency with which these sub-themes were invoked is almost half of the sub-total frequency under speeches of the same category in Table 6.6. A comparative analysis of these two tables (6.6 and 6.7) depicts interesting results which are essentially an inverse on each other in that the three sub-themes whose per centage frequencies are highlighted in yellow, grey, and red give mixed and vastly different pictures. To start with, the aid-debt sub-theme ranks first in Table 6.6 with 36 hits, while in Table 6.7 it ranks fifth with only 7 hits in the whole literature. This means that in Sankara's speeches, this sub-theme appears more than five times than it appears in the literature.

This vast difference exposes the selectiveness and perhaps the difference in interpretation of scholars when they write about certain people's thoughts, philosophies and politics. This is crucially important to unravel because as alluded to in the Methodology chapter, giving Sankara a voice and platform to directly "speak" to us in this study was of utmost importance so that his ideas, plans, and political strategy would not be drowned by those write about him. He had to speak for himself through this thesis and this category (endogenous development) and its sub-themes have "exposed" the contradicting views about what Sankara prioritised concerning endogenous development and what the literature purports he prioritised.

The sub-theme that ranks first in Table 6.7 (economic self-reliance) with a per centage frequency of 22.6, ranks third in Table 6.6 at a meagre 10.1% which is under half in this table. Lastly, the issue of austerity which received less attention (6.1%) from Sankara's speeches, received a

much higher coverage from the literature at 17.0%, which is almost thrice the attention it got in Sankara's speeches. These words by Sankara best captures his endogenous development approach fuelled by economic self-reliance as embodied in the statement, "let's produce in Africa, transform in Africa, consume in Africa. Produce what we need and consume what we produce, in place of importing it" (ibid: 308).

Table 6.8: Sankarism (speeches)

Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Women emancipation	406	1	79,5%
Discipline/Principle(d)	35	2	6,8%
Implementation	32	3	6,3%
Participatory governance	22	4	4,3%
Pragmatism	10	5	2,0%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	6	6	1,2%
Incorruptable(ility)	0	7	0,0%
Sub-total	511		100,0%

The issue of women emancipation is arguably one of the most important subjects that Sankara had to deal with in the revolution because of two main reasons. One, this issue was a fairly new subject in Burkina Faso and Africa at the time (in the 1980s), and no other sitting President had advocated women rights and equality the same way Sankara did in Africa. Secondly, this was an internal battle which he had to wage even within his own CNR movement and amongst many of his comrades and colleagues in government who were resisting to forego their own male privilege so that women can also have the same opportunities in the Burkina politics, economy, culture and society at large. Amongst all sub-themes that were quantified in this study, women emancipation under the Sankarism (speeches) category garnered the most hits (406), and it scored by far the highest per centage frequency of nearly eighty per cent (79.5%). It is only followed by the "revolution" sub-theme at 64.1%. To illustrate the extent of the importance of the agenda to uplift women for Sankara, he detailed his profound plans in his government's blueprint document (political orientation speech) which outlined the plans and policy direction of his revolutionary government when he said:

From now on the philosophy of revolutionary transformation will take over in the following sectors:

- 1) the national army
- 2) the politics of women
- 3) economic transformation or building the economy (Sankara, 1985: 54).

The fact that what he termed “politics of women” is not only on the agenda as a stand-alone item, but also it appears second on the list of the three priority areas of urgent intervention, is evident enough that he took seriously the plight of women in a patriarchal Burkinabe society where women were always marginalised. It shall be explained in more detail in the qualitative findings section, the concrete actions and steps he took to uplift women. It is words such as the following, uttered by Sankara on women’s emancipation, that cement and explain the high numbers that this sub-theme got from his speeches; “Revolution and women's emancipation go together. It is no act of charity or flight of humanitarianism to talk of women's emancipation. It is a fundamental necessity for the triumph of the revolution... Women's liberation, like all freedoms, has to be fought for — it is not just given out” (ibid: 54). What is also striking and different about the three-point plan from the political orientation speech is that the revolutionary transformation philosophy of his government is very short, detailing only three points from just three sectors; army, women affairs, and the economy. This is different from what many African countries have today as their transformation/development strategies in that such plans often have over 10 or 20 points to tackle for as many sectors and this seems to cause a lot of confusion as this “elaborate” plans would be written in over hundreds of pages in even hard to grasp language for a normal layperson. This difference in formulating government plans/visions between the Sankara government and current government could be useful to learn from.

Table 6.9: Sankarism (literature)

Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Implementation	25	1	28,1%
Women emancipation	18	2	20,2%
Participatory governance	17	3	19,1%
Discipline/Principle(d)	12	4	13,5%
Pragmatism	7	5	7,9%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	7	5	7,9%
Incorruptable(ility)	3	6	3,4%
Sub-total	89		100,0%

This category under literature also presents some glaring contrasting results when compared with Table 6.8. The first is that sub-total of the frequency with which the sub-themes were used in the sampled book chapters and journal articles only adds up to 89, which is a very small number when compared with the 511 hits under speeches. The second contrasting observation is that women emancipation, the sub-theme which ranked first in the previous table, now ranks second, but what is more outstanding is that this sub-theme was made reference to 318 times less in the literature, which is a huge gap. What may account for these vast differences is that, again, on the one hand Sankara placed significant value, time and energy on what he called “the politics of women” and this is evident in the repeated times he invokes this issue in his speeches and also in the actual actions he takes to remedy the situation. On the other hand, scholars who write about Sankara and the Burkina Faso revolution seem to only mildly appreciate the veracity of this women politics conundrum by ranking it second, after the ‘implementation’ sub-theme. There is, however, a small gap between these two sub-themes (implementation and Women emancipation) in Table 6.9 as they score 28.1% and 20.2% respectively. When combined, they make up about 48% of the frequency and the combination may be ideal and gives a clearer picture because many of the women emancipation concerns Sankara had were in fact implemented in various sectors, thus affecting the slightly higher frequency numbers of the implementation sub-theme. The last two sub-themes in both tables (6.8 and 6.9) are constant as they appear at the bottom of the tables as the least ranking sub-themes.

Tables 6.10 and 6.11 below: comparison of two categories with highest frequency

Table 6.10: Revolution Category

SANKARA'S SPEECHES				LITERATURE ON SANKARA			
Category: REVOLUTION (Rev.)				Category : REVOLUTION (Rev.)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution/ary	296	1	59,9%	Revolution/ary	396	1	64,1%
Democratic and popular revolution	58	2	11,7%	Coup de'tat/military	122	2	19,7%
Freedom/independence	53	3	10,7%	Freedom/independence	49	3	7,9%
Proletariats/peasants	47	4	9,5%	Democratic and popular revolution	24	4	3,9%
Coup de'tat/military	21	5	4,3%	Proletariats/peasants	14	5	2,3%
Decolonise/ation	15	6	3,0%	Authoritarian/ism	9	6	1,5%
Authoritarian/ism	4	7	0,8%	Decolonise/ation	4	7	0,6%
Sub-total	494		100,0%	Sub-total	618		100,0%
*NOTE: Revolution category got an aggregate 1112 hits (frequency), making it highest category							

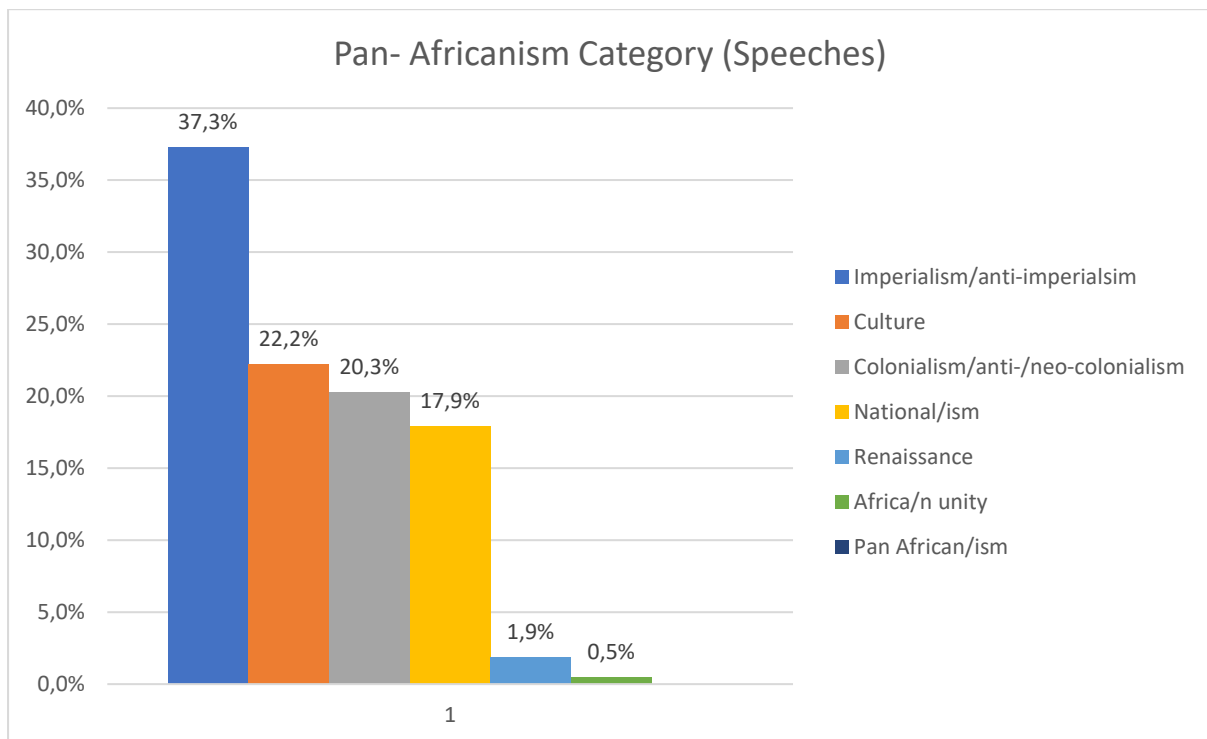
Table 6.11: Sankarism Category

SANKARA SPEECHES				LITERATURE ON SANKARA			
Category: SANKARISM (SKM)				Category: SANKARIM (SKM)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Women emancipation	406	1	79,5%	Implementation	25	1	28,1%
Discipline/Principle/d	35	2	6,8%	Women emancipation	18	2	20,2%
Implementation	32	3	6,3%	Participatory governance	17	3	19,1%
Participatory governance	22	4	4,3%	Discipline/Principle/d	12	4	13,5%
Pragmatism	10	5	2,0%	Pragmatism	7	5	7,9%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	6	6	1,2%	Self-negation/Servant leadership	7	5	7,9%
Incorruptable/ility	0	7	0,0%	Incorruptable/ility	3	6	3,4%
Sub-total	511		100,0%	Sub-total	89		100,0%
*NOTE: Sankarism category got an aggregate 600 hits (frequency) making it the second highest category							

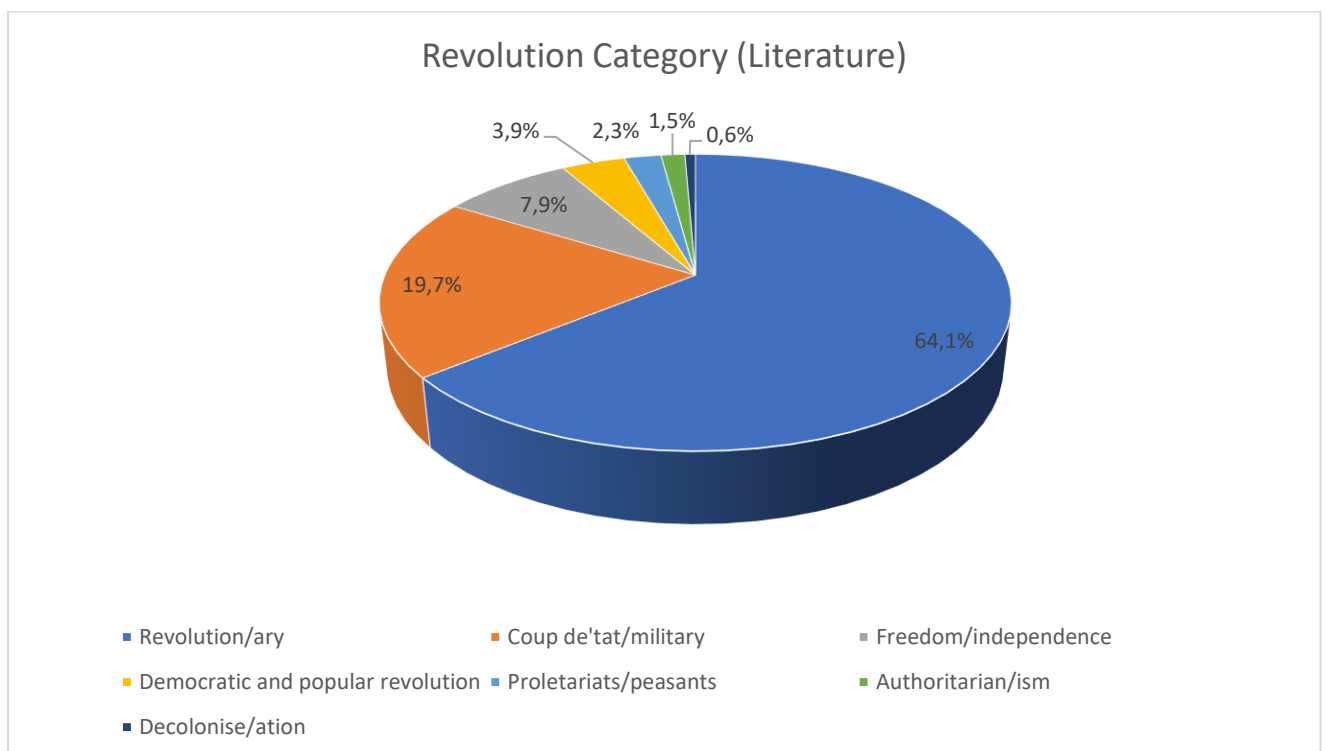
These two tables give a visual and easy to track comparison of the top two categories which gained the most hits in the sampled speeches and literature. The colours under “% Frequency” columns show the comparisons of selected sub-themes in both categories. See detailed comparative analysis of these two tables under Graphs 6E and 6F respectively.

Graphic depictions of the above (select few) results

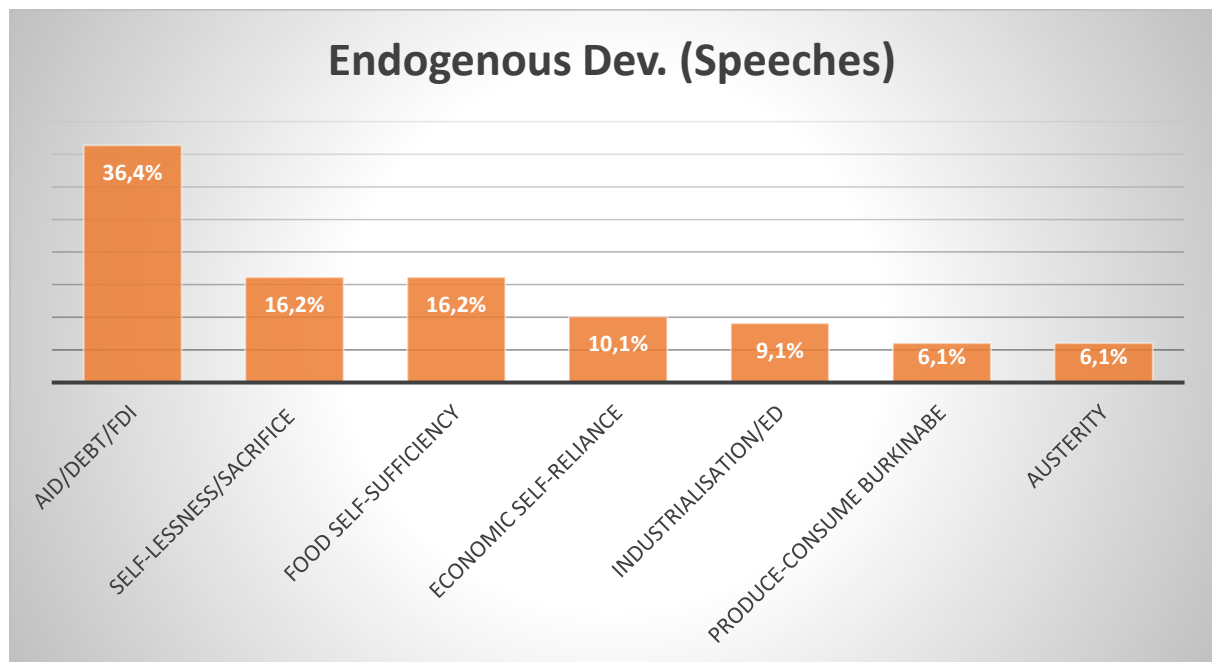
Graph 6A:



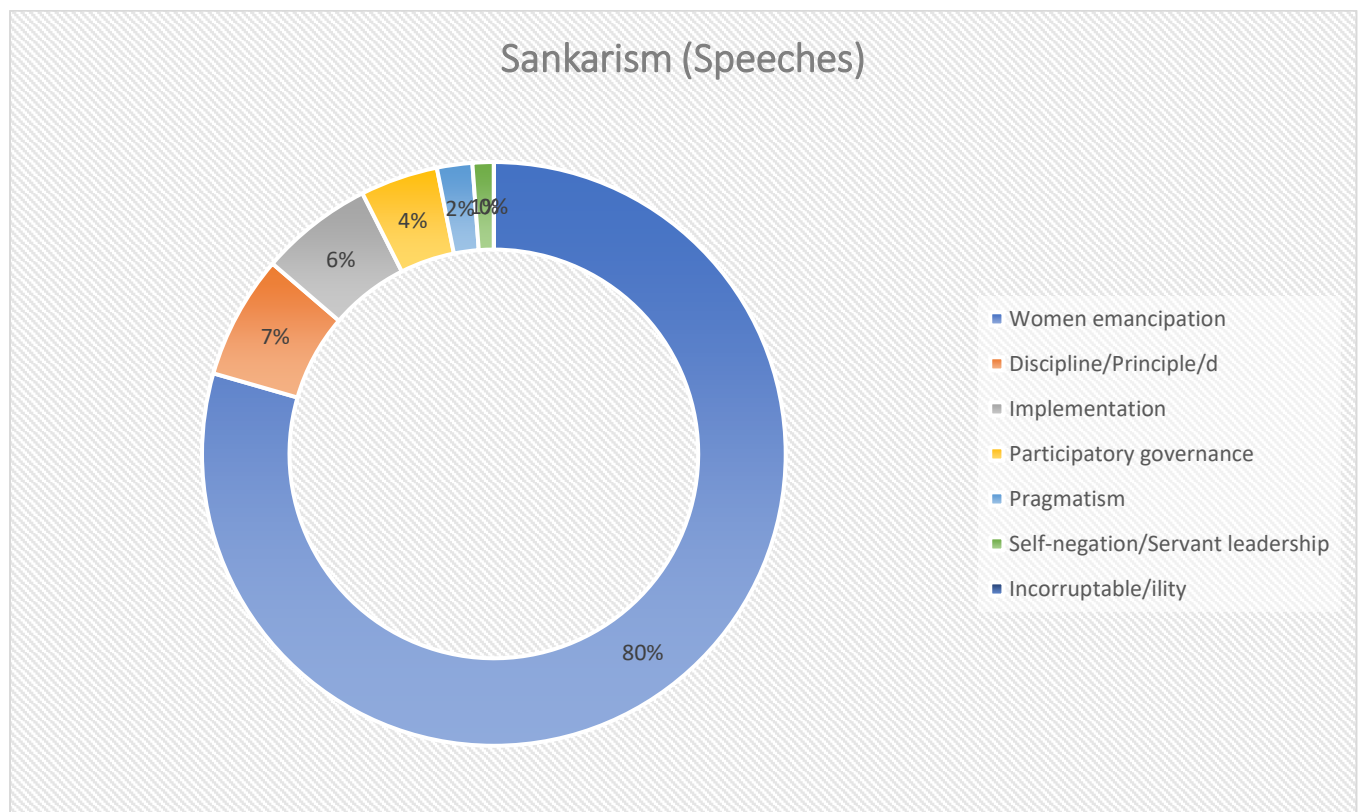
Graph 6B:



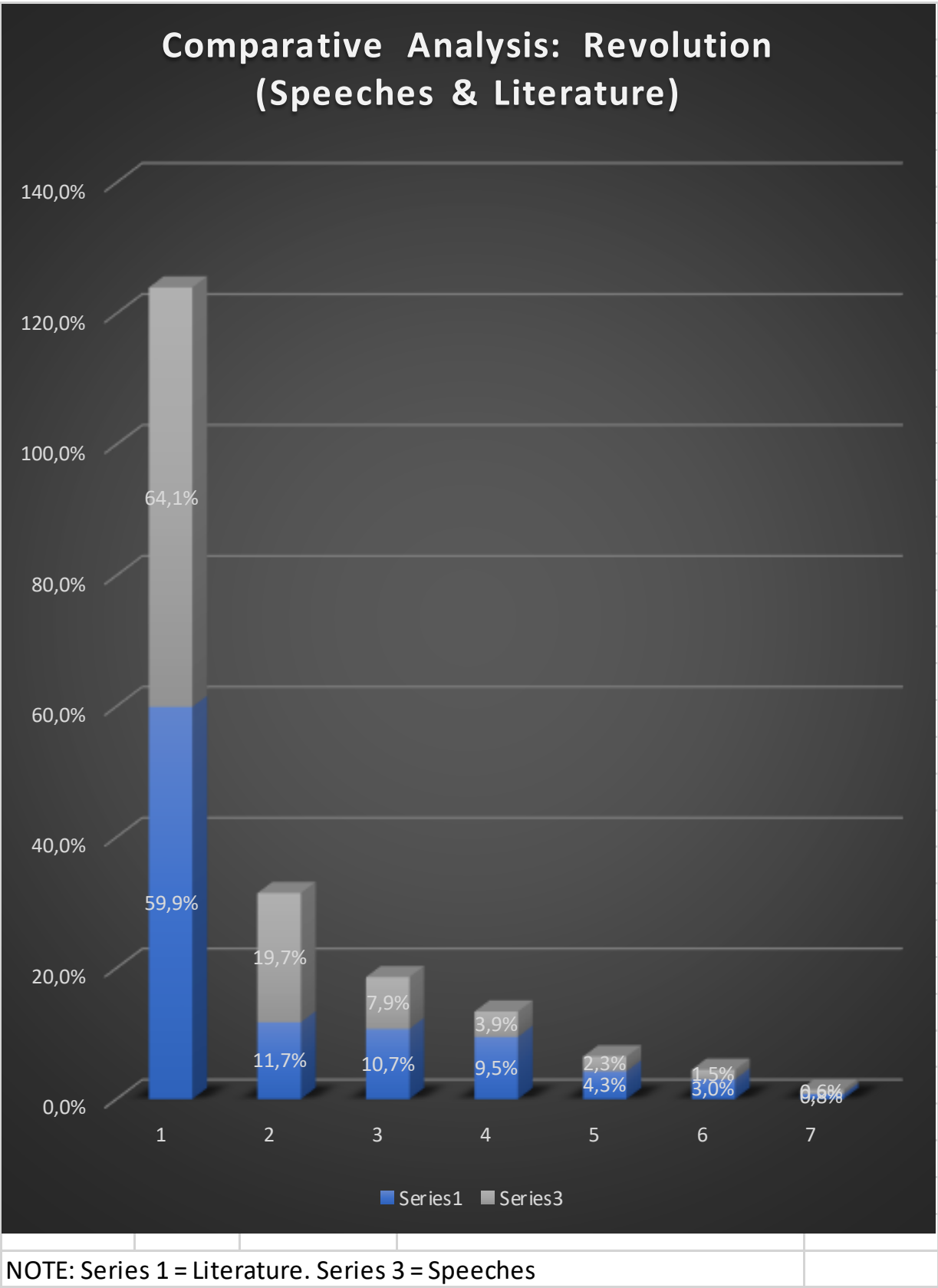
Graph 6C:



Graph 6D:



Graph 6E:

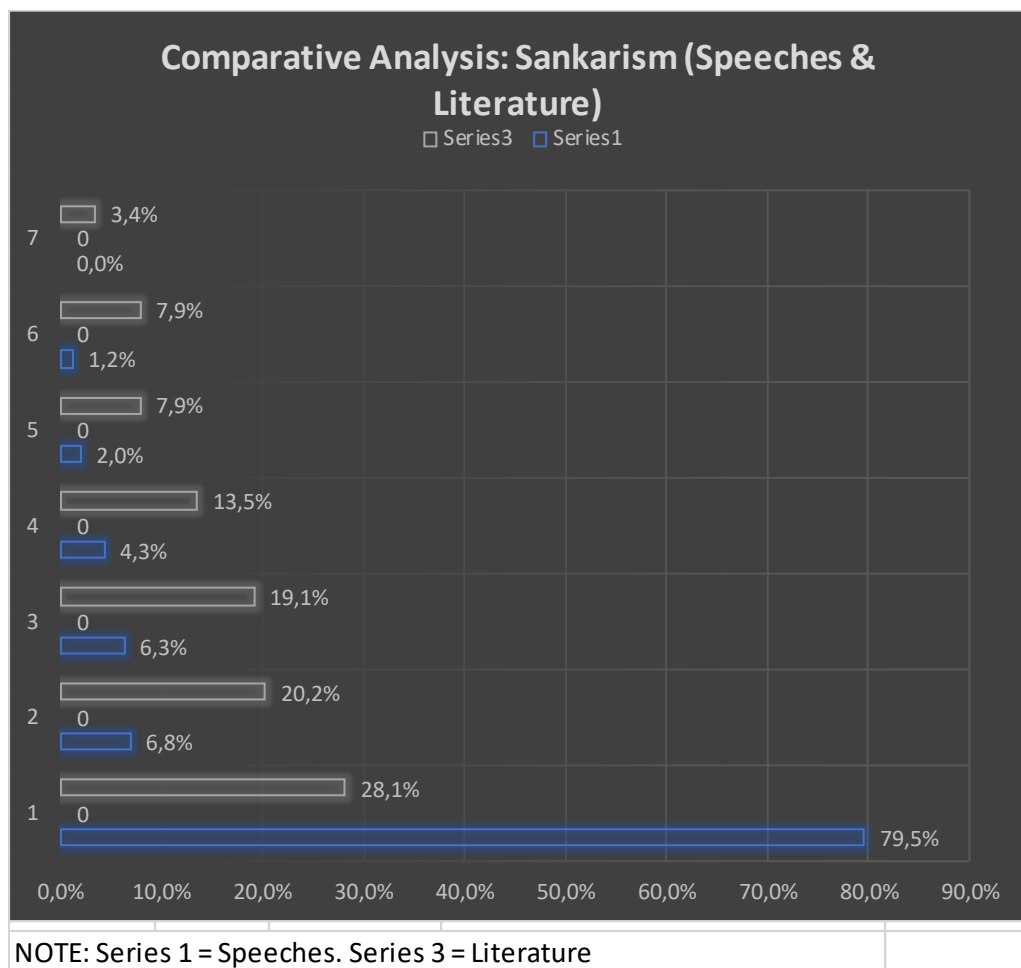


On the X-Axis: 1 = Revolution(ary). 2 = Democratic and popular revolution. 3 = Freedom/independence. 4 = Proletariats/peasants. 5 = Coup de'tat/military. 6 = Decolonise/ation. 7 = Authoritarian/ism. Also note that the blue histograms/bars (series 1) represents results from the literature and the grey ones being results from speeches.

Comparative Results from Graph 6E

Numbers 1 to 7 on the X-Axis of this graph depict keywords/sub-themes of the 'revolution' category from both the literature and speeches. The revolution(ary) (No. 1) keyword shows that it got almost the same attention and use from both the literature and speeches, receiving almost sixty per cent (59,9%) hits from the literature and 64,1% from Sankara's speeches and interviews. This indicates that scholars who write on Sankara and the Burkinabe revolution concur, to some extent, that Burkina Faso underwent a revolutionary process in the four years that Sankara was President, notwithstanding the debate about whether the 04 August seizure of power was a coup or in fact it was a revolution as proclaimed by its instigators and the NCR. The second keyword, democratic and popular revolution (No. 2), gives a different picture from the two categories under comparison. This keyword is invoked in the literature 11,7% times, whereas in Sankara's own speeches and interviews, it is made reference to almost twice as much (19,7%). This implies that Sankara saw the Burkinabe revolution as having support and participation of the ordinary masses of Burkina Faso, therefore making it a democratic revolution as opposed to an autocratic and purely military-led revolution. It is important to note that more than 50% of the National Council of the Revolution (NCR) cabinet was actually civilians, even though the military officials in the cabinet wielded a lot of power.

Graph 6F:



On the Y-Axis: 1 = Women emancipation. 2 = Discipline/Principle/d. 3 = Implementation. 4 = Participatory governance. 5 = Pragmatism. 6 = Self-negation/Servant leadership. 7 = Incorruptible. Also note that the blue rectangles/bars refer to Sankara’s speeches while the grey ones refer to literature.

Comparative Results from Graph 6F

Women emancipation, which is keyword Number 1 in the graph above, was one of the priority areas that preoccupied Sankara and his government and this can be witnessed in his speech title, ‘The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women’ (Sankara, 1987) which Sankara delivered during International Women’s Day in March 1987 in Ouagadougou. In the speech, he elaborated the importance of women, not only in the social sphere, but also in the political arena, in the economy, and most importantly, in the revolution itself. It is, therefore, not surprising that the theme “women emancipation” under this category of “Sankarism” received an overwhelming use in many of his speeches, being referred to close to

eighty per cent of the time (79,5%). This keyword only attained 28,1% hits from the literature, signalling that scholars did pick up the importance of gender mainstreaming and women emancipation from Sankara's administration, and did not seem to rank it as high as other competing issues which were facing Burkina Faso during Sankara's tenure. The second keyword that scored the highest per centage use was "discipline or principle(d)" which describe Sankarism as Sankara's way of governance and his political philosophy. This keyword scored 20,2% and 6,8% from the literature and speeches, respectively. These results indicate an important aspect being that scholars saw Sankara as a disciplined and principled leader, despite many of his other shortcomings such as the view that his government was "undemocratic" as shown by the previous results on the "democratic and popular revolution" in Graph 6E.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This qualitative section of the chapter accounts for findings drawn from in-depth qualitative interviews during fieldwork that was predominantly done in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in the month of October 2017, and a few more interviews done in Pretoria (Tshwane), South Africa. Two other interviews were done via skype with political economy and legal experts based in Canada and in the USA respectively. In addition to these in-depth one-on-one interviews, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted at Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo University in Ouagadougou with undergraduate and postgraduate students. Documentary analysis of various sources was also done, ranging from written literature, archives, policy documents, and visual data such as documentaries on Sankara and the Burkina Faso revolution. Lastly, observation research was also conducted throughout my stay in Ouagadougou. For more details on these data collection approaches, refer back to the Methodology section.

After extensive content and thematic analysis of the transcripts, which culminated in 196 pages of transcribed raw data, 1196 codes which were narrowed down to 300 codes, then to 84 codes, and subsequently I ended up with 10 themes. The ten themes distilled from all these, after its triangulation, together with research questions they address are depicted in table 6.12. From each of the 10 themes, 48 sub-themes were extrapolated, meaning that for each theme, there was an average of 5 sub-themes (see Table 6.13, for more details).

Table 6.12: Themes and Questions Answered

No.	Theme Name	Research Question/Objective Answered
1	Democratic and popular revolution	Research Objective 2
2	Sankara as an anti-thesis to many leaders of today	Research Question C; Research Objective 3
3	Endogenous development strategy	Research Objective 4; Primary Research Question; Research Question A
4	Recourse to force as one of his strategies	Research Question B; Research Objective 4.
5	Merging theory with practice	Primary Research Question
6	Sankara was ahead of his time	Research Objective 1.
7	Afrocentric leadership	Research Question C.
8	Basis of Sankara's thinking: produce what you consume	Research Question C; Research Objective 4
9	All sectors of the state must be revolutionised	Primary Research Question; Research Objective 3.
10	Debt and foreign aid are the handmaiden of colonisers	Primary Research Question

Source: Author

Table 6.13: Qualitative Research Themes and Sub-themes

No.	Themes	Sub-themes/Sub-categories
1	Democratic and popular revolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coup d'état or revolution debate • Sankara Used Soft Power and/or Coercion to Persuade • Mixed governance approach: bottom-up and top-down • The Military and Civilians together instigated and sustained the revolution
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security naivety of Sankara • Pedagogue, teacher, & thought leader • Learning from others experiences (Sankofa)

	Sankara as an anti-thesis to many leaders of today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sankara was not a power monger and not “drunk” with power • Young age + conviction = the terrific leader that Sankara was
3	Endogenous development strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic self-reliance • Social, political, cultural, and epistemological independence • People (themselves) as features of development • Use of “letsema” concept in development projects • Strong, lean, clean and efficient government (strong state)
4	Recourse to force as one of his strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional leaders were stripped off their monopoly control of land • Hostility towards political parties and trade unions • Dictatorship of the masses/proletariats and class antagonisms
5	Merging theory with practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sankara’s deeds as his writings • Systematic delinking from France • Authenticity in policy making
6	Sankara was ahead of his time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosopher and a religious being • He was Anti personality cults • Women advocacy/emancipation • Sankara, a devoted advocate for “people-to-people Pan Africanism”
7	Afrocentric leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural renaissance: culture as the epicentre of development efforts • Elevation of Burkina languages as academic languages • He liked ancient African quotes and proverbs • Sankara valued education
8	Basis of Sankara’s thinking: produce what you consume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrarian revolution: Food sovereignty • Environmental consciousness

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion & production of organically produced food
9	All sectors of the state must be revolutionised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sankara's government gave new meaning to democracy and elections • Democracy should be subject to people's culture and their way of life • Justice system was reformed such that it was culturally sensitive • Institutional reforms: CDRs, National Council of the Revolution, etc.
10	Debt and foreign aid are the handmaiden of colonisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating within their means: fiscal discipline and self-imposed austerity • Debt free Africa: “debt as a cleverly organised reconquest of Africa” • Aid should help us overcome more aid

Source: Author

Theme 1: Democratic and Popular Revolution

The character of the August 1983 revolution was described by Sankara and his governing movement, National Council of the Revolution (NCR), as a democratic and popular revolution, implying that, as far as they were concerned, their seizure of power was agitated and supported by the popular masses of Burkina Faso, especially the labour unions, leftist political parties, peasants and the poor working class Burkinabe. How does Sankara himself define and explain the concept of democratic and popular revolution?

The August Revolution is a democratic one. Its first tasks are the ending of imperialist domination and exploitation; the purging of social, economic and cultural habits which keep our country in its backward state. It will be built on the involvement of all the people. They are mobilising themselves around the democratic and revolutionary structures which will support their interests over those of reactionary allies of imperialism (Sankara, 1985: 52-53).

He goes on to add, in describing the nature and outlook of the August revolution, that “the revolution's object is to give the people power. That is why the very first act of the revolution, after the 4 August Proclamation, was to call on the people to form Revolutionary Defence

Committees (CDRs)” (ibid). The dual character of the August revolution, according to Sankara, is informed by its conceptualisation as first being democratic and secondly, popular. In giving perspective about this dual character, Sankara begins by clarifying how it is democratic thus: “its primary tasks are to eliminate imperialist domination and exploitation; and to purge the countryside of all the social, economic, and cultural obstacles that keep it in a backward state. Its democratic character flows from this” (Sankara, 2016: 66). The second character of the revolution, which is that it had popular support, is premised on the argument that “it draws its popular character from the full participation of the Voltaic masses in the revolution, and their consistent mobilisation around democratic and revolutionary slogans that concretely express their own interests in opposition to those of the reactionary classes allied with imperialism” (ibid). Dembele (2013) further adds that “

...the Sankarist Revolution was one of the greatest attempts at popular and democratic emancipation in post-Independence Africa. That is why it is considered a novel experience of deep economic, social, cultural and political transformation as evidenced by mass mobilisations to get people to take responsibility for their own needs”.

Coup d'état or Revolution Debate

For a theoretical understanding of what parameters define a revolution vis-à-vis a coup, Tanter and Midlarsky (1967: 265) define the former, using the Marxian school of thought, as “a product of irresistible historical forces, which culminate in a struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat”. Another definition, slightly different, by Arendt (1965: 34), views a revolution as “a kind of a restoration, whereby the insurgents attempt to restore liberties and privileges which were lost as a result of the government’s temporary lapse into despotism”. Coup d’état is best defined in relation to the definition that one uses for a revolution, thus, in that regard, Brinton (1952) describes a coup d’état as a mere replacement of a group of elites (in the case of Africa, neo-colonial elites) by another group of elites.

Tanter and Midlarsky (1967) make a case for the importance of differentiating between different typologies of revolutions. They delineate between four types of revolutions: mass revolution, revolutionary coup, reform coup, and palace revolution. They argue that these forms of revolutions can be differentiated by criteria based on level of mass participation, duration of the revolution, the extent/level of domestic violence during the revolution, and lastly, intentions of insurgents (ibid). Therefore, based on these parameters, mass revolution is the highest level of revolution (ideal form of revolution) and palace revolution is the lowest

form of revolution. For instance, mass revolution has a high level of mass participation, lasts longer (duration), high domestic violence often characterises it, and intentions of insurgents are fundamentally based on need for an overhaul of the politico-economic, social and cultural structures of society as a whole. It is important to note that definitions and narratives about revolutions are based on the so-called “Great Revolutions” which usually comprise the trio, French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions. This myopic theorisation of revolutions premised on these three has numerous challenges. The case of the August revolution in Burkina Faso essentially fits the “mass revolution” conceptualisation, albeit the fact that it does not meet all the four criteria mentioned above, because its duration was fairly short and it did not have a lot of domestic violence. However, it meets the other two criteria because it had mass participation (popular support from various sectors of society) and its intentions were ideologically grounded because it ultimately and fundamentally changed the political, social, economic and cultural structures of society. Siani-Davies (1996: 454) also adds that, “This tendency to rely on the three ‘Great Revolutions’ as the yardstick against which others are to be measured, in many ways lies at the heart of the definitional problem, since, as the definitions are drawn from the very phenomena they seek to define, they are bound to be unduly restrictive and historically specific”.

During the first FDG with a group of undergraduate students at the Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, when asked what their immediate views and reactions are when they hear the name Thomas Sankara and the August 1983 revolution, this group of students, most of them between the ages 18 and 23, seemed to share almost similar views about Sankara. Student D, responding to this “ice-breaking” question said, *“for me Thomas Sankara was the leader of the CNR who proclaimed a coup d’état to be a revolution. So, in my opinion, he misled people as to know what a revolution is and now several youths believe that revolution equates a coup d’état. So, his suppressive actions marked the student movement as well as the working class.”*

Another student (Student E), who also shared similar sentiments with Student D, albeit more scathing of Sankara and his relationship with the student movements, passionately replied that,

In my opinion as a student, I will emphasise on his negative side. After his coup d’état re-baptised revolution, he considered himself to be a revolutionary and it is him who effectively suppressed people who were in fact revolutionaries. I can cite a case at the university of Ouagadougou where a law student was suppressed for having affixed his signature on a declaration from the Popular Front to denounce the fact that what

Thomas Sankara had done was effectively a coup d'état and not a revolution. He suppressed the student, who was expelled from the university and deprived of social services to the extent that he could no longer catch the bus here, he could no longer have a plot of land here to build a house or shelter.

It is important to note that only 11% of the students who participated in the FGD were sympathetic to, and had anything positive to say about Sankara and his revolution, while the majority of the students often described the August 1983 seizure of power as merely “a coup baptised as a revolution”. One pro-Sankara student in this FGD, Student P, had this to say;

In my view, among the Presidents from independence or so-called independence until now, if there was a President to be back in power, I believe it will be Thomas Sankara, because for four years he achieved something great that others have not managed to repeat for several years. Every human [being] is subject to mistakes and if there was a President to be back [in power], I think it will be him. (Words in parenthesis mine).

This was the first student after many who spoke before him, who thought that Sankara did a sterling job as President and achieved more than all Presidents Burkina Faso has seen, combined, and if any President could come back to power, it would have to be him.

Another student (R), from the 11% of students who were sympathetic to Sankara's cause, spoke at length, cogently and skilfully explaining why he thought Sankara was miles ahead of other Presidents in Burkina Faso (past and present) in transforming the lives of people. Student R argued thus:

...because me personally, he was born before me and died before I knew him [born after his Presidency and death], but if you pick up people from the street and whoever you will be asking about Thomas Sankara, he knows. Why? Because he left his image [legacy] before leaving. If you go around Africa [and] in the world and ask about Thomas Sankara, everyone knows who he was. I did not know him, but today when you read his works you know what he achieved a lot. With regards to the other Presidents, even if one picks ten, some of them are completely unknown and it looks like they have not even existed. When it is about him [Sankara], everyone talks about him and this means he has achieved something really remarkable. In only four years with Thomas Sankara [as President], rails were built and up to date the Burkinabe population is benefiting from that. Among all those Presidents whom he succeeded, I do not see

anyone, except Sankara, for one has seen Presidents who have been there for twenty-five years, but the population is still crying that they steal, they did so and so. If there was another President like him, it will be great... to work and eat [food security] instead of begging from the Europeans all the time". (Words in parenthesis mine).

This student argues that Sankara left a sterling legacy, that is why he is the most known and admired President in Burkina Faso. The student is of the view that, part of his legacy was building infrastructure that still benefits the Burkinabè to date. (See Annexure A and B for some of the infrastructure that was built during Sankara's Presidency). Self-sufficiency was a key lesson this student learned from Sankara. He also wished Sankara could come back, or there was another leader like him who could fight imperialism and Burkina Faso's dependency on the West, especially on its former coloniser, France. Many students in this FGD wanted to extricate their country from the umbilical cord-like parasitic dependency that continued to bind and define the relationship between Burkina Faso and France.

In an attempt to analyse the events of 4 August 1983 and before, and to come to a determination of whether what happened when NCR assumed power could legitimately be described as a revolution, Dialo (2018) argues that,

Thomas Sankara's Revolution is often dismissed with the argument that it was the result of a military coup rather than the outcome of a popular movement. The argument suggests that because it was born out of the will of just a few radical putschists, it had no real substance and roots in Voltaïque society and history. Such a presentation of the Revolution, which only focuses on the military manoeuvres of August 4, 1983, is superficial and fails to take into account two essential conditions: (1) the international and national context from which the Revolution arose; and (2) the legitimacy that Thomas Sankara acquired in the years before the Revolution.

Factors that explain the first condition which necessitated the revolution are that it took place in a climate of severe institutional instability of a neo-colonial state, where there were coups, one after the other, replacing elites with more elites, resulting in worsening living conditions of ordinary Burkinabe. On the international front, "the international context of the early 1980s imposed on oil-importing countries in Africa such as Upper Volta several external shocks: rising oil prices; rising interest rates of the American Federal Reserve Bank, on which debt was indexed; continuously deteriorating terms of trade; and, the slowing of international trade due to the global recession" (Dialo, 2018). One of the factors that determine the legitimacy of a revolution and any form of government is the trust the people have in the leader and the

administration in power, which is also augmented by ideological and policy orientation of those in power. In the context of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara earned his legitimacy before and after the revolution.

There are at least three incidents prior to the August revolution that earned Sankara political legitimacy and popularity among the working class and peasantry who constituted over 90% of the population. The first was his role in the 1974 Mali-Burkina Faso border war which was diffused with minimal bloodshed, and he played an instrumental role in this conflict's resolution. Secondly, due to the stripes he had earned from this war, and his rising popularity in the army, he was offered a position in government by Colonel Saye Zerbo which he refused but later accepted due to a lot of pressure from his seniors. He took on the role of Minister of Information in September 1981 where he swiftly began doing things differently (ibid). A few months later, Sankara would resign decrying the repressive and bourgeoisie nature of the government. "Another coup occurred on November 7, 1982, without the participation of Sankara and his left-wing comrades of the army who believed that a movement led only by the army would not allow for the deep political changes to which they aspired" (Dialo, 2018). Thirdly, after this coup which was led by Captain Jean Baptiste Ouedraogo, Sankara was again appointed in government (on 10 January 1983), this time in a much higher position as Prime Minister of Burkina Faso. It was during this time that he gained the most popularity in Burkina Faso and abroad due to his fiery speeches and unapologetic stance on his anti-imperialism rhetoric. Budging to pressure from France, Captain Ouedraogo approved the house arrest of Sankara, because he was a nuisance to the French government and their neo-colonial interest in their former colony, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso).

The following account of events following Sankara's house arrest, which led to massive demonstrations in Ouagadougou where citizens were calling for the release of Sankara, best explains why events of, and leading up to, 4 August 1983 can be characterised as revolutionary. Dialo (2018) explains that,

For two months, the political situation remained unresolved, each of the camps paranoid and consolidating its positions. Sankara and the left wing of the army strengthened their ties with civilian populations and trade union organizations, and set up a political platform. Captain Blaise Compaoré, a friend and long-time comrade of Thomas Sankara, then took the rumour of an attempt to assassinate the latter as a pretext to move with troops on Ouagadougou in the afternoon of August 4, 1983. Civilian groups supported the operation by cutting electricity in the capital. By 9:30 p.m., Compaoré's troops controlled the capital. At 10:00 p.m. Thomas

Sankara announced via radio the fall of the government of Ouedraogo and the beginning of a revolutionary process, the formation of the National Council of the Revolution.

This seems to put to bed the debate about whether August 1983 represents a revolution or if it was, as some students argued, a coup baptised as a revolution. In another Focus Group Discussion with senior postgraduate students at the same university, weighing in on this debate, Student PSG 1 was of the view that *“his revolution was a popular revolution. It was important to get closer to the people, to be impregnated with the people’s problem and teach the people how to solve their problems themselves”*.

One of the political economy experts on Burkina Faso and the August Revolution, here named Mr Fay (pseudonym), who actually met Thomas Sankara in March 1986 as a student leader from Senegal, strongly argues that the Burkina Faso Revolution cannot be misconstrued as a coup for various reasons. He had this to say;

I don’t know if you know this, but Thomas Sankara did not take power. He was in prison (under house arrest). When the military who took over, power was already taken by the people before Blaise Compaore got to Ouagadougou with the Po` militants, power was already taken by the people. Just like in the Russian revolution, all that the military did was to come and restore order.

In my comment to this statement, I queried if this was just like the way things unfolded in 2014 (Revolution 2.0) when the people had already decided that they had had enough of Blaise and took it upon themselves to chase him away, and the military just came in to restore order and help facilitate in the formation of the transitional government. His response was that;

It’s exactly like that, that is the same scenario that also played out in the August 1983 revolution. And they (the people) wanted Sankara. When Blaise came from Po`, the people were unequivocal that they wanted Sankara, they did not want him. My analysis is that one of the things that Blaise has never gotten over with is he wanted to take power but people wanted Sankara. He felt like people owed him something for breaking Sankara out of prison. It was not a coup d’état. Not at all, it was not a coup d’état, it was not initiated by the military. The people had already decided that they wanted Sankara (as their leader) before anything else. The difference between the 2014 revolution is that the people did not know who they wanted.

These two extracts from Mr Fay are a justification of why the August 1983 takeover of power is called a revolution. Note that Mr Fay repeats twice that "power was already taken by the people". This emphasis is important and may have underlying connotations indicating that he was certain that what unfolded in Burkina Faso was nothing short of a revolution. Mr Fay makes an interesting observation about some parallels between the August 1983 revolution and the October 2014 Revolution 2.0 that ousted Blaise Compaore. Perhaps, as the saying goes, "the chicken had come home to roost", that is why Blaise was removed from power the same way they took power during the August 1983 revolution. It is clear from these accounts by Mr Fay that the people were adamant that they wanted Sankara as their leader. This may have triggered some envy and jealousy from Blaise as he believed he was the rightful person for the Presidency considering the key role he played in breaking Sankara out of house arrest and mobilising support of other soldiers and other sectors of society. This could, I argue, be one of the root causes of what led to Sankara's assassination on 15 October 1987.

Sankara's Use of both Soft Power and Coercion to Persuade

In the senior students' FGD, Student PSG 2, responding to the question about how Sankara was able to change people's mindsets after so many decades of colonial and neo-colonial rule, said,

It is not easy to rise one day and ask someone to stop the way he had been functioning and adopt something different. So, sometimes, change can be brought by constraining people. This explains why many people were opposed to his policy, labelling him a dictator. How can a dictator succeed in achieving food security in four years? It would not have been possible if he was really a dictator. The recourse to force was one of his strategies. If you do not compel people to work, they would not do so. Also, he was not tired of letting them know about the benefits of his policy.

This was a concession that Sankara would at times, as a military man, tend to use force and coercion where persuasion failed. However, what the latter part of this student's response tells us is that Sankara was hardly tired of conscientising people and changing their mindsets so as to get their buy-in on certain programmes.

Mixed Governance Approach: Bottom-Up and Top-Down

One of Sankara's female colleagues in government, who was also a cabinet member (I will call her Mrs Mpho), explained that Sankara generally believed in consultation before decision making, as one of his governance approaches. Post the debates and back-and-forth engagements with dissenting views, Sankara often insisted and ensured that implementation of agreed decisions was expedited, as he was always in a hurry to get the job done. Mrs Mpho commented that,

...he was a pedagogue and would always spend time explaining his reasoning to make you understand even if you disagreed. And if you still disagreed, then provide him with an argument. Debate with him could last three to four hours, for he wanted to convince you about his position. In case you did not want it to last three to four hours, you had to provide him with some solid arguments and he will agree.

Mrs Mpho summed up Sankara's governance model thus: *"Sankara's mechanism of governance goes from the bottom-up and from top-down. He involved the people in decision-making process and implementation"*. Bottom-up approach to governance implies that ordinary citizens, civil society organisations, trade unions and other non-governmental organisations are allowed to play a meaningful role in government of affairs of a country, by holding the three arms of the state (executive, judiciary, and parliament) accountable. Top-down approach means that the government, mainly cabinet, goes unchallenged in running affairs of the state, with minimal or zero involvement of the general population and other non-state actors in society.

Trimberger (1978) and Harsch (2013), however, hold a different view about the involvement of the popular masses in Sankara's governance of Burkina Faso. They argue that the NCR wielded immense power and through the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR), these implied that it was by and large a "revolution from above". In light of these two opposing views about how Sankara governed (top-down vs bottom-up), it would seem that, theoretically and idealistically, Sankara believed in a mixed approach to governance where there is a nexus between top-down and bottom-up approach where the state and society converge in policy making and implementation. However, in reality, the former approach (top-down) seems to have inadvertently dominated the governance discourse as seen by the over involvement of the military in state affairs and by the heavy handedness of the CDRs as instruments of government policies and projects.

The Military and Civilians Together Instigated and Sustained the Revolution

The role of the military during the August 1983 Revolution was explained by Mr Fay under the “coup d’état or revolution debate” sub-theme above. This sub-theme discusses and reports findings on the role of the military in sustaining the revolution after the seizure of power in August 1983. When a follow up question was put to Mr Fay about the role of the military in the efforts to rebuild Burkina Faso, he indicated that the military also played an instrumental role, hand-in-glove with the civilians;

They were also heavily involved; they did not just sit idle in their camps. They transported people to go to these different places where development projects were taking place across the country. Because they had the know-how in some fields, they were also asked to volunteer their services in rebuilding the country like anybody else. That’s encouraged a lot of people to take part in volunteering their labour and services, it also helped the military to mingle and be one with the people. A lot of affordable houses were building for poor communities/neighbourhoods at very cheap prices. That project changed the face of Ouagadougou.

Ernest Harsch (2013: 361) adds that, “the CNR⁴² and cabinet were hybrid military–civilian formations, although the greatest influence was wielded by Sankara, Compaoré, Captain Henri Zongo and Commander Jean-Baptiste Lingani, the four “historic” leaders of the August 1983 seizure of power”.

Theme 2: Sankara as an Anti-thesis to Many Leaders of Today

What made Sankara different from many leaders of his time and those in contemporary Africa, one might ask? The first thing that stood out about Sankara was that he was very young at the time when he ascended to power. Many heads of government at the time and currently are very old, more so in Africa where the population is dominated by the youth, yet government leaders are very old, many well over 60 years. There is often a misconception about his actual age when he became President of Burkina Faso in August 1983. A lot of literature, erroneously, I argue, often say that he was 34 years old when he took over power as President. He was in fact still 33 years old because he was born on 21 December 1949, so precisely and technically

⁴² Note that some scholars use the acronym CNR while some (myself included, in this study) use NCR for the National Council of the Revolution. The difference in how it is written (abbreviated) is because of how the name is written in French.

speaking, he was still 33 years old when he became President. He would only turn 34 on 21 December 1983, meaning that he became President just over four months before his 34th birthday in 1983. More detailed reasons why and how Sankara was an anti-thesis to many of his peers and contemporary leaders are explored and reported in the sub-themes that follow.

Security Naivety of Sankara

A significant number of people interviewed (over 60%) were of the view that Sankara was a bit reckless with his security because he would travel without much security during the day and at night even in remote areas of Burkina Faso. Unlike most leaders today, who spend a lot of money while travelling with an entourage of heavily armed top security, Sankara was more concerned about being with, and among, the ordinary Burkinabe, hearing their grievances directly. Mr Fay revealed that Sankara was easily accessible. He said,

Dignity, respect and transparency in all that one did and in governance were key pillars for him. Sankara was a very accessible person. Every Wednesday of every week in the first few years after the revolution (first two years), he would shake people's hands at one of the big avenues in Ouagadougou where they would line up to greet him. Everyone and anyone from everywhere would come to shake his hand and share a few words with him. This 'tradition' was later stopped by Blaise because he said that it was too risky for Sankara to keep doing that. That was a strategy to try and isolate Sankara from the people. Sankara complained about this, but eventually they stopped it, he conceded.

This also demonstrates his accessibility to ordinary people. It also signals that he deemed interacting with people and getting to understand their grievances, in person, as important for his administration. It also seems Blaise long planned the demise of Sankara, because he convinced him to stop the “tradition” of greeting people as a way of creating a distance between him and the people. This is an indication that Sankara and Blaise did not see things the same way, and had divergent ideological orientations and possibly even different motives for taking power. Unfortunately, Sankara was too devoted and invested in his personal relationship with Blaise, whom he saw as a brother as they grew up together in the former's home. This is a crucially important lesson for contemporary leaders, to not let their personal relationships and friendships with their cadres to cloud their judgement when in government.

Mr Fay further added that, Sankara “...was a bit naïve, because he believed that everybody was just like him (virtue of humanity). That made him let his guard down even in potentially

dangerous situations, just like the shaking of hands of citizens every Wednesday. He again, sincerely believed that Blaise meant well.” My comment to this was that Sankara’s love for his people might have clouded his judgement at times, even resulting in his untimely death. I drew comparisons between Sankara and Tupac Shakur (the renowned African American rapper whose death is still unresolved to date). Tupac Shakur too once strongly believed in Black people to the extent that he did not think anyone among them could harm him because he believed himself to be genuinely working for the upliftment of Black people as a whole. However, only after he was shot the first time did he begin to be more circumspect about that position and became more cautious about his security. One of the students from the FDGs argued strongly that *“a revolutionary must not be naïve.”* He stressed that Sankara was warned many times before he was killed that there was a plot against him, but he did nothing about it. Perhaps the greatest indication that Sankara, unlike many leaders, was not too security conscious and did not worry too much about his own life, but about those he served, is a remark by Mr Theo (a Burkinabe diplomat) who attested that,

Even today, there is one of his military commanders, Bukari Kabore who told Sankara then that his second in command (Blaise Compaore) was planning a coup against him. He was warned several times. He (Kabore) asked Sankara what he must do to stop him, and Sankara said he should not do anything. He believed that if there must be betrayal, it would not come from him. He said, ‘If somebody must die it must not be him but me’.

Mr Theo went on to argue that,

Some say that this was one of the greatest mistakes and even betrayal by Sankara, by refusing to neutralise Blaise so that the revolution could survive. By refusing to do something, he had accepted to be killed and be a martyr at the expense of the revolution. That was one of his greatest mistakes. His greatest mistake was that he remained passive [even with the knowledge of the plot to kill him]. (Words in parenthesis mine).

This is one of the greatest and gravest mistakes Sankara committed that compromised the continuation and sustainability of the revolution and cost him his life. Some say (including myself) that in allowing himself to be easily killed like that, he betrayed the people of Burkina Faso.

As if he was rubbing more salt to the wound (security naivety), Mr Lipad revealed that,

Sankara was challenging the colonialists and their stooges a lot, but he was not protecting himself from their reactionary potential and imminent counter attacks. He was not taking seriously his security and threats that were reported to him. A week before he was killed, the Cuban ambassador and other diplomats warned him that there was an imminent threat to his life and that his security could not save him. The Cubans asked that he allow them to offer him 300 soldiers from Cuba to ensure his security. He refused the offer, arguing that if his people could not ensure his security he would rather die, than to be protected by a foreign country. When Compaore was in Ivory Coast two weeks before the assassination of Sankara, he was telling people that in two weeks he would be welcoming them in Burkina Faso as President.

Indeed, it would seem that, by all accounts, Sankara was negligent when it came to his security. However, these allegations against Blaise further implicate him that he had a hand (covertly or overtly) in Sankara's assassination. There is also evidence that Ivory Coast played a major role in the killing of Sankara. Furthermore, the fact that Blaise was rescued by the French army from Burkina Faso to Ivory Coast (where he was given asylum and citizenship) in 2014 after he was ousted from power by the masses, further points to the role played by both Ivory Coast and France in the killing of Sankara. Lastly, Sankara's belief in the need for self-reliance and sovereignty of Burkina Faso blinded him from realising that Pan Africanism implied reciprocity - giving and receiving help from your alliances as a sign of international solidarity.

Pedagogue, Teacher, and Thought Leader

This sub-theme may seem a bit far-fetched as an accurate description of Sankara mainly because he, unlike a number of his peers (Presidential), was not academically educated and did not study at university. The peers I allude to here are people like Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Thabo Mbeki, Robert Mugabe, etc. However, for one to be an intellectual and a teacher, one does not necessarily have to go through the Western education system and people like Malcom X and Sankara himself prove this. In the introduction to the book, *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, Gary Young explains that,

What Malcom X elaborated on and projected, both in the book and in his life, was not so much a political strategy but a state of mind. Its contribution to liberation ideology combined the intellectual with the attitudinal. Malcom X presented a position underpinned by both independence and defiance – a notion that freedom is not a gift awarded by others but a right seized by those eager enough to seek it and brave enough to fight for it (Haley and Malcom X, 2007: 8).

What this brief comparison of Malcom X and Sankara demonstrates is that for leaders to be pedagogues and intellectual thought leaders who fundamentally change people's lives, they can do so by being self-taught. Both these leaders were voracious readers who in many ways achieved more than those who got their formal education from Western institutions. This should not, however, be read as casting aspersions on those of our progressive leaders who obtained their education from the Western school system.

Another intellectual and political economy expert on Burkina Faso and West Africa whom I interviewed who also grew up and briefly worked with Sankara spoke passionately about Sankara's intellectual astuteness. Mr Lipad (pseudonym) indicated that,

He [Sankara] convinced people that what we think is impossible is not really impossible. Sankara was also a pedagogue. If he has an idea to sell to you, you would just buy it. This was one of his strengths. He could take a very complex thing about economics and simplify it. For instance, the analogy he gave of imperialism being in a plate of food that we eat (imported food).

This shows that he was a master teacher due to his eloquence and extensive reading because he could easily simplify and demystify complex phenomena so that laypersons could understand. This is how he was able to get closer to people and eventually get their buy-in.

In further explaining the extent to which Sankara loved reading, Mr Lipad said,

Sankara was one guy; he could complete a book in one night, no matter the size. When he was very busy to read an entire book, he had a strategy which he used, he would take a book, set a committee and task them to read it and give him a report the following day at 8 am because at 9am he would have a meeting where lessons from that book would be used. When he met them in the morning, he would ask for summaries from each of the committee members and challenge them on aspects of what they read. Sankara was very very educated, not purely from a military background. He did not even have university degrees but he was educated. He was not degreed, he was

educated. He also had a rich cultural background. He could talk convincingly about almost any topic. It's this knowledge, and before the knowledge, this interest to African people about where they came from, why they are at this stage of development, what can they achieve."

Lastly, another demonstration that Sankara was indeed a teacher and a self-taught intellectual was when he retraced the history of the man and woman relationship from antiquity during his International Women's Day rally in Ouagadougou in 1987. He said,

For millennia, from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age, relations between the sexes were, in the opinion of the most skilled palaeontologist, positive and complementary in character. So, it was for eight millennia. Relations were based on collaboration and interaction in contrast to the patriarchy where women exclusion is a generalised characteristic of the modern historical era (Sankara, 2016: 263-264).

Mr Ben (pseudonym), a top and prominent government official in Burkina Faso, added that, *"you can study, reach the rank of professor, but if you lack a political consciousness, you are mediocre. Sankara did not have a PhD, but today eminent students, many personalities study Sankara's thought."* All this evidence implies that Sankara was an organic thought leader.

Learning from Others Experiences (Sankofa Approach)

When Sankara declared before the United Nations General Assembly in 1984 that "we are the heirs of world revolutions", this meant that they were not willing to re-invent the wheel and that they were instead willing to learn from others' experiences so that they would not repeat the same mistakes in their revolution. It is important to note that the Sankofa Approach to learning and doing things is inspired by the Sankofa bird which flies at a high speed with an egg in its mouth while its head is facing backward in order to better navigate the direction it must take to its final destination. In short, this approach argues that for a society to meaningfully progress in its quest for development, it ought to learn from its historical repository and archives so that they can move forward better informed about their previous mistakes and successes which they can harness and adapt for future generations. At a theoretical level, in line with this study's theoretical framework of Afrocentricity, the Sankofa Approach which is intrinsic to this theory was important in situating and analysing Sankara's thoughts and actions in Burkina Faso as President.

At this UN forum, Sankara boldly said,

Our revolution in Burkina Faso embraces the misfortunes of all peoples. It also draws inspiration from all of man's experiences since his first breath. We wish to be the heirs of all the world's revolutions and all the liberation struggles of the peoples of the Third World.... We draw the lessons of the American revolution.... Just as Monroe proclaimed "America to the Americans" in 1823, we echo this today by saying "Africa to the Africans", "Burkina to the Burkinabe". We wish to retain only the core of purity from each revolution (2016: 142-143).

An important example that shows that Sankara devoted a lot of time in getting to fully understand what people's needs were, is given by Mr Dami who explained that,

The ability to listen trains you as a leader, for when you listen to someone, you take note of good ideas. Sankara had three notebooks with three different colours. He noted all the ideas, he listened, but he wrote down as well; he wrote down his own thoughts. He took a lot of ideas from others and shaped them, and this is important for a leader.

Sankara learned from other nations like China which managed to industrialise within a short period of time. Mr Lipad further mentioned that Sankara sought to implement the trial and error technique to innovation and technology, borrowing technologies that were already used in other countries to build Burkina Faso. In this respect, he proposed what he termed the tuf-tuf technology thesis as the way to go:

To be more precise on Thomas Sankara's thinking as far as I know, is that he was more comfortable in tuf-tuf technology. This is a 'nomatopy'. This is a word built on the sound you hear. This also means use of basic technology rather than advanced technology. The latter was not favourable to him because it was very expensive, but also it had to come with skills- training for skills transfer which further inflated the costs of such technology. The 'middle-age' tech was better off because they could master how to use it and reproduce it.

In similar vein, Sankara also advocated the Chinese model through the backward-only moving tractor anecdote as follows;

I attended a conference where Sankara was speaking and he gave an anecdote that when Chinese were still trying to industrialise, they wanted to build a tractor, but they did not have the know-how. So, they imported one from Europe and disassembled it. They then re-assembled it and when they started the engine, the tractor only moved

backwards. That's how they learned and this gave us an inside of what he wanted to do in Burkina Faso as well. The basis of his thinking was that we had to produce all that we consumed locally because when we import everything it means that we are creating jobs elsewhere, not here at home.

Sankara was not a Power Monger and not 'Drunk' with Power

When Thomas Sankara was first appointed as Minister of Information in September 1981, he initially refused to accept the appointment. He later resigned from this position only two months into the job because he felt the governing regime under Colonel Saye Zerbo was too repressive and neo-imperialist as there was no media freedom. This act clearly shows that Sankara was not enticed and could not be easily lured to positions of power in government. He could have easily taken up the Ministerial post or later the Prime Minister's post and turned a blind eye to the suffering of ordinary Burkinabe. Instead, he sacrificed all these powerful positions of power that would have brought him and his family financial freedom for principle.

Mr Theo was adamant that Sankara was not obsessed with power and all the privileges that come with being a President. He said,

First of all, let me tell you that Thomas Sankara was not a dictator; he was just a normal human being with ups and down, a man of conviction. Once he was convinced of something, he tried to implement it until someone was able to convince him otherwise and he was ready to come back and review his position/stance. He was an open-minded person, open to discussion and persuasion. He was ready to accept his mistakes and to correct them.

Mr Theo went on to explain and justify why he is of the view that Sankara was an anti-thesis to many leaders of today, in comparative terms:

Sankara was the counter example of many leaders today.... He was a counter example of this curse. Many leaders today are doing the exact opposite. He was not a slave to riches. He did not get to power to enrich himself. He was there for the people. He was a servant leader and this manifests in his policies. On [his] political ideology, he contributed a lot to African Renaissance. Under his leadership, Burkina Faso was an example of a Renaissance.

During the course of this interview, Mr Theo was at pains to make an analogy between Sankara and the character in Ayi Kwei Armah's (1968) brilliant book titled, *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*, which narrates a story of "an upright man resisting the temptations of easy bribes and easy satisfactions and winning for his honesty nothing but scorn".

Furthermore, as a sign that Sankara had no intentions of being in power for ever, Mr Theo disclosed that "*on the political level, he was ready to merge Burkina Faso and Ghana working together with JJ Rawlings. Some say that Sankara and Rawlings were lobbying Togo to join their proposed union...*". Had this merger of these three countries happened, Sankara was arguably not worried about who would be President of the new country emerging out of the union. This, therefore, again implies that he was not beholden to power, because if he was, he would not have advocated for such a union especially considering that Burkina Faso was not the strongest and wealthiest country amongst the three.

Young Age + Conviction = The Terrific Leader that Sankara was

As alluded to in the introductory paragraph to Theme 2, Thomas Sankara assumed leadership in the highest office in Burkina Faso as President when he was still quite young, at the age of only 33 years, and his youthful age was instrumental in shaking things up in government as he was full of energy and ideas of how to speedily transform Burkina Faso. Over and above his age, Sankara is described by over 80% of interviewees in this study as being a man of conviction and principle at all times. Mr Fay explained the level of dedication that Sankara had for his people thus:

Most people took part [in development programmes] because they learned from his example; he was not an armchair revolutionary. One could draw parallels from what [John F.] Kennedy (35th American President) once said that, "don't ask what your country can do for you, ask yourself what you can do for your country". That was the thinking and mindset that Sankara sought to instil in the Burkinabè. (Words in parenthesis mine).

Answering the question about whether Sankara's young age may have played any significant role in shaping his radical governance posture, Mr Theo thought this was important, but he believed that it was rather his conviction to serve that had the biggest impact. He explained,

I mean when you are young and full of energy, full of optimism, full of zeal. You just want to go ahead and think less about the obstacles or dangers, you are committed, fully committed. There is a French saying which translated it means, 'for souls nobly born, worth does not await the passing of years'. That is, how long you live does not matter, what matters is the value of the life you lead. Therefore, for Sankara, age helped, but it was more his conviction for the people and his job that played a major role. His innate personality added to the young age was 'explosive'.

It is clear from these sentiments that Sankara's principles and self-sacrificial leadership was a result of many factors, age being just one of them, but certainly not the silver bullet. If he was not committed to the cause and lacked conviction to tirelessly serve even at the young age, he would not have achieved half the things he did.

Theme 3: Endogenous Development Strategy

One of the foremost and most respected and renowned theorists on endogenous development, or what some call self-centred development, is Prof Joseph Ki-Zerbo from Burkina Faso. Professor Ki-Zerbo was one of the most prominent historians in Africa and he was one of the first to attempt to produce⁴³ a comprehensive history of Sub-Saharan Africa through the widely acclaimed book, *The General History of Africa*, published by UNESCO. Drawing from Ki-Zerbo's work, Demebele (2013) explains that,

The concept of endogenous or self-centred development refers to the process of economic, social, cultural, scientific and political transformation, based on the mobilisation of internal social forces and resources and using the accumulated knowledge and experiences of the people of a country. It also allows citizens to be active agents in the transformation of their society instead of remaining spectators outside of a political system inspired by foreign models.

This is a concise and easy to comprehend definition of endogenous development that is used in this study. This theme, as demonstrated in the sub-sections that follow, attempts to answer the last objective of the study which is "to distil lessons for socio-economic development from the Sankara administration of 1983-1987". It also addresses the primary research question of the study: "What leadership traits and governance strategies could Africans learn from

⁴³ Note that this book was edited by Prof Ki-Zerbo, it was not his single authored book.

Sankara's revolutionary government to advance African unity and renaissance?", specifically the aspect on governance strategies.

Economic Self-Reliance

In the political orientation speech of October 1983, the issue of economic development took third position in the list of sectors that the philosophy of revolutionary transformations sought to tackle. The transformed national economy, according to Sankara, had to be "independent, self-sufficient, and planned at the service of a democratic and popular society" (Sankara, 2016: 81). This national economy sought to engender these major reforms (ibid):

1. Agrarian reform;
2. Administrative reform;
3. Educational reform; and,
4. Reform of the structures of production and distribution in the modern sector.

One of the outstanding agrarian reforms which formed the bedrock of economic self-reliance and industrial development in Burkina Faso was to "make agriculture the basis for the development of industry" (ibid).

Speaking to the question on how food self-sufficiency was achieved in Burkina Faso, Mr Ben also reiterated the importance of agrarian reforms that were introduced. He recalled that,

It was first of all the agrarian reform. It was very important and even today that area remains so. But there was also a need of relevant instructions to incite Burkinabè to produce sufficiently what we consume. Such a strategy allowed Burkina to become food self-sufficient by 1986, for we even managed to export what we were producing in Burkina Faso. This approach was emphasised notably in the west and south west regions, where the use of industrial or semi industrial units played a crucial role in exploiting that wealth. This later led to the setting up of Dafani factory. This means that we had a range of stuffs we could sell to Europe.

Responding to the question on how markets for increased agricultural produce were found for economic self-reliance to be actualised, Mr Ben said,

Sankara setup an airways company named NAGA NAGA NI which was an air freight. Since to export requires the need for markets, at the government level, emphasis was

put on that marketing. Your question is to know, if one does not have consumers, how do one intend to export? The basic economic rule posits that one export when there is excess. That is why I mentioned that we were food self-sufficient by 1986. The culture of cereals, sorghum and maize were produced for local consumption, but there were cash crops such as cotton produced for sale.

Social, Political, Cultural, and Epistemological Independence

In as much as Sankara borrowed a lot epistemologically from Marxism, he was not married to this ideology and he tried as much as possible to avoid to brand their revolution with any ideology, arguing that their ideology was to end hunger and oppression of the Burkinabe. During an interview with Newsweek, Sankara said, “we seek human dignity; that is our ideology”. Indeed, Sankara vehemently refused to be boxed into a specific ideology. In this regard, he once asked, “why try at all cost to put us into ideological boxes, to categorize us?” (Sankara, 1983). Dialo (2018) argues that,

A second set of reasons for the rejection of class struggle, and thus of Marxist thought, results from a desire for cultural and epistemological independence. African-descended intellectuals have long addressed themselves to the psychic effects of post-Enlightenment thought’s negation of Black reason. Marxism’s historico-cultural specificity of 19th-century Europe has alienated many African thinkers who long for an authentically African sociological and political thought, which would owe everything to African minds and nothing to European ones.

In as much as Sankara wanted cultural and epistemological independence from the hegemony of Euro-Americans, he, however, did not completely reject European ideologies like Marxism; he took from it what he deemed to be useful and progressive elements that would help him better understand, theoretically, some of the complex challenges his country was faced with. This seems to be a more pragmatic approach, instead of complete rejection of everything European, when in any case, the genesis of many of these philosophies emanates from Africa. Sankara understood that for Burkina Faso to be politically independent, it had to also be economically independent, otherwise their political independence would be futile and merely symbolic. That is why in his efforts of enforcing austerity measures, he went to the extent of reducing lodging and flying expenses of his government officials and, as such,

...what was saved from those budgetary cuts, was invested in education, health and agriculture programs in rural areas. To get an idea of the lengths to which this austerity went, let us remember that during his trip to New York at the UN, his delegation, which included ministers, was lodged on mattresses lying on the floor of Burkina Faso's embassy. Official journeys and missions of State officials were only made in economy class (Dialo, 2018).

The level of sacrifice that Sankara required of his colleagues in government are mind blowing, and it is hard to imagine any President currently in Africa, and frankly anywhere in the world, who would take such drastic measures for the sake of his people. Another interesting example that justified that Sankara was an independent thinker and strived for political and ideological sovereignty is when Sankara was in Libya during one visit; it is said that Qaddafi tried to persuade him to adopt his 'Green Book' governance approach, but Sankara vehemently refused, saying to Qaddafi, according to Andriamirado (1987: 58): "We are not exactly political virgins. Your experience interests us, but we want to live our own".

People (Themselves) as Features of Development

Getting the buy-in of the popular masses of Burkina Faso was fundamentally important in the survival and relative longevity of the Burkina Revolution. That is why Dembele (2013) also reiterates the notion that,

The Sankarist Revolution was one of the greatest attempts at popular and democratic emancipation in post-Independence Africa. That is why it is considered a novel experience of deep economic, social, cultural and political transformation as evidenced by mass mobilisations to get people to take responsibility for their own needs, with the construction of infrastructure, (dams, reservoirs, wells, roads and schools) through the use of the principle 'relying on one's own strength.

In line with the principle of relying on one's own strength, which underpinned the development strategy of endogenous development, these key tenets and principles of endogenous development were important in the revolution,

- The necessity of relying on one's own strength
- Mass participation in politics with the goal of changing one's condition in life
- The emancipation of women and their inclusion in the processes of development

- The use of the State as an instrument for economic and social transformation (Dembele, 2013).

Mr Lipad, responding to a question on Sankara's style of leadership, whether it was mostly coercive or consultative, was of the view that society would not have joined hands with the government if they felt they were being forced to partake in projects which did not benefit them. He gave an example of the railway line that Burkinabe people built with their bare hands without a cent from foreign investors or international financiers. He said,

The railway from Ouagadougou to Khaya (which was meant to be from Ouaga to Tambao – 600km, but he was killed before its completion) was built by Sankara so that the export business could grow. Because they could not get funds from international donors like world bank and IMF, they set out to build it themselves. Every civil servant, student, ordinary community members were lobbied for this mega project. Each community would build at least one kilometre of railway where it passed by their community and in less than a year there was 100km of railway built without foreign investments.

This is one of the classical instances where ordinary people realised that no one was coming to save them, so they were convinced by Sankara and his government to join hands with the state in making their own development and they were able to build 100km of railway without being indebted to France, the World Bank or IMF.

Use of 'Letsema' Concept in Development Projects

Letsema is a Sesotho language word which means "shared responsibility in accomplishing community projects". It was used in many parts of Lesotho and other Southern African countries where a certain village would converge to, for instance, help with their labour and other resources, a certain family to plough their fields, and in turn the family that was helped would do likewise for the next family. At times during harvesting period, the produce would be shared by the owner (that was assisted) of the field with those families and individuals who helped him during ploughing and planting phase. The same concept was resuscitated to some extent in Burkina Faso during Sankara's Presidency in building low-cost housing and efforts to curb deforestation and desertification.

The army also had an important role in these community projects as expressed under Theme 1. Explaining one of the new roles of the transformed national army and its place in the democratic

and popular revolution, together with and among the masses, Sankara (2016: 77) details three key roles of the army: The most important and relevant role of the three, which resonates with the Letsema concept, is that it must,

...participate in national production. Indeed, the new soldier must live and suffer among the people to which he belongs. The days of a free spending army are over. From now on, besides handling guns, the army will work in the fields and raise cattle, sheep, and poultry. It will build schools and health clinics and ensure their functioning. It will maintain roads and transport mail, the sick, and agricultural products between regions by air.

These numerous community development projects that were assigned to the army during the revolutionary era of Sankara enabled the army to become one with the people. Ultimately, it is the army's contribution to the developmental programmes of Burkina Faso that played a significant role in the endogenous development strategy of Sankara.

This inward-looking approach to development (self-centred development) was possible and perhaps the only principled option to develop that Burkina Faso had after declaring its anti-imperialism stance and a quest to be truly sovereign. Strategic and selective delinking as theorised by Samir Amin (1990) was therefore embarked on in Burkina Faso, albeit in a careful and measured way. Mr Azoo, an expert on the history and political economy of West Africa, pointed out that,

The Sankarist model was a delinking from the world capitalist system and it might be viewed as utopian, but I still believe it may still be part of the solution. We need selective delinking with the capitalist market in order to build our own market. This means that we have to build our own industrial and agricultural system, our own currency to uplift the peasantry, the women and so on, and to fight against neo-colonial and imperialist forces across the continent. And then when you are really ready after that, like China did, then start integrating in the capitalist system.

The concept or theory of delinking is almost synonymous to Samir Amin, as already stated. According to Amin (1990), delinking does not mean “autarky but refusal to bow to the dominant logic of the world capitalist system”. The dialectical and unequal power relations between the core and the periphery, in dependency theory terminology, is an important aspect that gives credence to why the Third World as a whole must selectively and strategically delink from the Global North capitalist system which is parasitical on the Third World. Sankara's

rhetoric and preoccupation with a need for African countries and all oppressed people of the world to fight imperialism and capitalism has strong resonance to Amin's proposition of delinking with the aim of creating self-sufficient countries in the Third World, with socialism as the ultimate ideal and end-goal. Zhang (2013: 104) adds that, "as a development proposal, delinking is associated with some kind of socialist program, which is a plan to build a national, modern and self-centred nation".

Strong, Lean, Clean and Efficient Government (Strong State)

Sankara's government proved in that short period of four years that the state can be used and turned into a revolutionary instrument of real socio-economic transformation of society. Dembele (2013) notes that Sankara,

...recognised that the state was central to successful transformations in these countries⁴⁴. He also knew that a state just emerging from the long and terrible colonial darkness could not rebuild without active and committed leadership. So, for him, the state must be central in the process of economic, social and cultural transformation. It was under the leadership of the state and its institutions that the masses were mobilised to participate in the first PPD⁴⁵.

A clean, lean, and efficient government that Sankara was working towards could only be a reality if corruption was uprooted and capable and skilled people were employed to serve society. Sankara led by example in this regard. Mr Ben made this shocking remark that shows how stringent Sankara was about principle and rooting out corruption amongst his rank and file:

These are strong examples in terms of governance. On Wednesdays, civil servants were shaking, because after the ministerial counsels, there were dismissals. It is different from today where ministerial counsels are followed by appointments. Under Sankara, the ministerial counsels were followed by dismissals; they were labelled kick downfield of civil servants guilty of embezzlement, misappropriation of public funds. When your file reached the council of ministers and if it happened that you had embezzled even

⁴⁴ The Socialist countries in the world like Cuba

⁴⁵ Popular Development Programme/Plan (PPD). This was development strategy that was consolidated between 1984-1985 by consulting the masses of Burkinabe across the length and breadth of Burkina Faso. It was meant to be a blueprint for their development programme for the next five years.

CFA franc 10, you had to go and people from whom was required a clean governance were appointed.

Adhering to principle and respecting the public funds was one way that Sankara demonstrated that a strong financially responsible state is possible. In his efforts to ensure that his government was efficient, responsive, and delivered basic services to the people as quick as possible, Sankara may have made some mistakes in the process as he was always in a hurry and at times some of his colleagues and officials would struggle to keep up with his fast pace.

Mr Dami, commented that,

It seems when working with Sankara for a whole day, there was no food, for he had no time to eat and it was in the evening that a dairy porridge was made for people to eat and carry on with work until one, two, four o'clock in the morning. His friend, XXX [name removed] recalls that sometimes he knocked off at four o'clock in the morning. Yet one must be in the office by seven, eight o'clock, he would not be late. Sometimes he rose very early at six, paid a visit to public offices and waited for people. This means that there were moments when he did not consider the basic needs of people whom he worked with and those people would blame him.

This means that he did not consider that his colleagues may not have had the same passion and drive as him, because he was a “workaholic” and he barely slept. This could have been one of his vices. Again, this revelation shows that Sankara could have been sleep deprived as he barely slept four hours daily, yet he was never late for meetings. He was meticulous about time.

Theme 4: Recourse to Force as One of Sankara's Strategies

As a military man, Sankara always carried his pistol with him, hanging on his waist wherever he went, even when travelling for diplomatic meetings abroad. This, to some, may convey a message that he was always war ready and some may even take it further to suggest that it was meant to intimidate his detractors. Whatever his reasons were of always having his pistol with him and always wearing his camouflage military uniform and his red beret, it is arguable that, owing to his strong military background, he was more prone and susceptible to using force, implicitly or explicitly. However, what is more important to understand, which this theme seeks to address, is to what extent did Sankara use force in implementing some of his developmental

programmes. An example of a rather benign but also coercive way of governing that Sankara introduced when France tried to sabotage Burkina Faso's exports of green beans by grounding their airlines which used to transport green beans to France and elsewhere was Sankara giving a directive that, "*every civil servant had to take some beans home and they would pay for them against their salary*", explained Mr Lipad.

Traditional Leaders were Stripped of their Monopoly Control of Land

Responding to a question on what may have influenced a lot of poor working-class Burkinabe to embrace the radical governance approach of Sankara, Mr Dami's response was different from other people who were interviewed, especially around the relationship between Sankara and traditional leaders. He said,

At the local level, he did not forget any social class, everyone was considered including pupils, peasants, civil servants, factory's workers and traditional kings. Many people thought that Sankara was against the traditional kings. Yet, he wanted to work with them but had only one concern, that was each society should evolve including African traditions. He wanted the kings to remove the evil practices from traditions that prevented the country from being developed. So, one can remove something through force and people thought that Sankara was against the traditional kings."

Mr Dami argues here, contrary to other respondents and the literature on the subject of traditional leaders, that in fact, Sankara had a good relationship with traditional leaders; he only differed with them where they wanted to keep the status-quo of backward and marginalising cultural practices that oppressed some among society like women. And of course, on the land question, where he argued that all land had to be under the custody of the state.

It is important to note that when agrarian reforms are introduced and land is nationalised, there is often an outcry that only those who are politically connected to the powers that would be would be given land. This was, however, not the case in Burkina Faso after their nationalisation of land. During my fieldwork in Ouagadougou, I was lucky to listen to a radio interview where one of Sankara's former Ministers was interviewed. The radio host asked the erstwhile Minister (whom I will name Mr Minister) an important question of relevance to this sub-theme;

Mr [Minister], we can recall how the CDR ordered President Sankara to invest on his plot, otherwise it will be withdrawn purely and simply. Tell us a bit about this

unbelievable story. Mr Minister's response was, why unbelievable story? The CDR took the list of plot's owners and realised there was nothing, people were not building, people were not investing. There was a file requesting people to invest, otherwise the plot had to be repossessed. But he received it and I also received it as well.

This revelation was quite profound because it demonstrated that not even Sankara himself (or his cabinet Ministers) were immune to the law and being reprimanded. The plots (land) given to the people were given with one condition: Use it or lose it! Even Sankara was held accountable based on this principle for his plot and he obliged to the notice.

Mr Minister, during the interview, further made a light joke about what the current President of Burkina (Roch Marc Christian Kaboré) would do if he was to get such a notice from his colleagues. This shows the stark difference between Sankara's government of holding everyone accountable for their actions or inactions, including the President, and the current government in Burkina Faso where Presidents are seen as demi-gods and they are only accountable to themselves. It shows that Sankara's government was indeed revolutionary and premised on accountability and transparency, not on idolisation of leaders even when they contradict their own laws and country's constitution. In closure, Mr Minister said *"this is what I will say that under Sankara's revolution, telling such things to the president was obvious. Come to invest, come to enhance your plot, otherwise, we will withdraw it and it was obvious. Isn't it revolutionary?"* Indeed, it was because Sankara was like any other civil servant. He was approachable and not beyond reproach. He was equal and one with the masses.

In line with this interesting example, Leshoele (2017: 49) also concurs that "Sankara's total rejection of idolatry was a symbolic gesture to show Burkinabe people, young and old, that the title of president does not make a person untouchable or superhuman". Martin (1987: 85) notes that internal contradictions and vested interests by certain privileged groups of society meant that the revolution would not be a smooth sail because, he explains: "by unambiguously proclaiming its intention of bringing about a new social order, the Burkinabe revolution was naturally coming up against a variety of traditional socio-political forces and vested interests-- notably the traditional chieftaincy and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie likely to slow down, or even to break up entirely, the initial revolutionary drive". What became the straw that broke the camel's back between Sankara and traditional leaders was when in August 1984 (the first anniversary of the revolution) the government issued an ordinance (No. 84-050-CNR-PRES) that attempted to establish an antibourgeois agrarian system more compatible with the

Sankarian governance approach. Amongst others, it stated that “all lands became the sole property of the state...” and that “land allocation committees would be composed of revolutionary activists. Traditional village leaders and land chiefs would play no role in land allocation decisions or in subsequent conflict resolution” (Matlon, 1993: 41-42).

Hostility Towards Political Parties and Trade Unions

Thomas Sankara and Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo had a complicated “love-hate” relationship. Sankara’s endogenous development economic approach was heavily influenced by the intellectual work of Ki-Zerbo who was one of the pioneering thinkers on this topic and it was not surprising that Sankara adopted this economic theory in Burkina Faso, considering that Ki-Zerbo was Burkinabe and quite active in the politics of Burkina Faso. However, these two leaders disagreed fundamentally on how power was taken in August 1983 and on the governance model that Sankara adopted. Mr Maristo, a postgraduate student at Ouagadougou University and a staunch Ki-Zerbo supporter, in an attempt to explain the relationship between Sankara and Ki-Zerbo and the resultant political parties’ stalemate in Burkina Faso, said,

Now firstly, the issue was about power, secondly the way through which power was taken and enmities developed by political parties among themselves to pledge allegiance to Thomas Sankara. So political parties that agree with Thomas Sankara decided to eliminate those that did not agree. Joseph Ki-zerbo’s political party the Mouvement de Libération Nationale did not agree with the way through which power was taken.

Even though many leftist political parties and unions supported the revolution in its early years, they themselves were not ready for the extent of changes that Sankara was to introduce, which would require everyone to sacrifice their previous lives of comfort for those that were left behind like peasants in rural areas. Skinner (1988: 444) observed that,

The early efforts of the new regime to get more productivity from civil servants and members of unions were greatly admired, but Sankara's more serious attempts to prevent them from monopolising the resources of the state generated opposition. He decided that Burkina Faso could not afford to continue paying out more than 60 per cent of its revenue to less than 0-3 per cent of its population, when famine and drought afflicted the remainder. For him this was a

matter of a few having 'champagne' and the vast majority only 'water', so the wages of civil servants were cut, their allowances for houses and transportation were curtailed, and they were called upon to make sacrifices comparable to those of the peasants

Following from this, Skinner (ibid: 451) further adds that, “When in 1984 some members of the teachers' union questioned the sacrifices demanded of them and went on strike, they were dismissed. And when in 1985 some dissatisfied civilians and military officers were arrested for allegedly plotting a coup, seven of the ring-leaders, including the unionists, were executed.’ This heavy handedness of Sankara when it came to dissenting views, be it from other political parties or from trade unions, greatly compromised his legitimacy as President, coupled with the way he handled land reforms with traditional leaders. All these internal contradictions only served to bolster external enemies of the revolution. Harsch (2014) also points out that Sankara, together with his NCR collective, made what could have been one of their worst mistakes by banning all existing political parties at the time because a determination was made that they were counterproductive to the revolutionary project. Harsch (ibid: 55) further adds that,

Sankara’s use of the term “democratic”, it should be noted, drew from notions of participatory democracy, not Western-style electoral models. In fact, one of the CNR’s first measures was to outlaw the country’s established political parties, which were seen as tools of the old elites. No elections to representative parliamentary bodies were envisaged. The absence of elections – except in within the framework of the obviously partisan CDRs – was later seen as one of the Sankara government major shortcomings, even by most of those who continued to follow his ideas.

One of the students from the undergraduate students’ FGD was very critical of Sankara and the whole August revolution, which he argued was not even a revolution. He referred to it as a “coup baptised as revolution”. Arguing against the NCR decision to ban political parties, the student made this interesting analogy:

A revolution is like two people in the fifth floor, one of them deciding to take the stairs and the other one saying, “no I’m in a hurry, I will jump.” He jumps and will be the first to arrive, but in which state? So, Thomas Sankara’s state and impatience made him fail. What he wanted to do as a revolution failed, for you cannot do a revolution without political parties. So, Thomas Sankara was a solitary hero or in other words a voluntarist.

This example perhaps best captures the idea that Sankara was perpetually in a rush and, in the process, he outpaced his comrades and society, and even alienating some of his former leftist allies.

Dictatorship of the Masses, Proletariats and Class Antagonisms

The fact that the biggest winners and priority of Sankara's revolution were the peasants and the poor working class, and that the biggest class that was to lose its privileges was the bourgeoisie, was an open secret. As Amilcar Cabral would say, the bourgeoisie class had to commit class suicide if it were to be integrated fully into the rest of society, and Sankara took this Cabral philosophy and actioned it in a short time in Burkina Faso. In essence, the "class death" of the bourgeoisie implied the "class birth" of the peasantry and the poor working class. Martin (1987: 85) beautifully formulates this notion of class suicide thus:

Another complementary policy should, according to Amilcar Cabral's vivid formulation, result in the collective "suicide" of the Burkinabe leadership as a petty bourgeois class, which would make it the true servant of the masses. The ultimate success of the Burkinabe revolution will be measured, to a great extent, by the success of this most delicate and painful "social surgery" operation.

The popular coalition of classes that Sankara (2016: 63-65) referred to as "the people" in the political orientation speech consists of:

- 1) the working class, seen as the "truly revolutionary" class;
- 2) the petty bourgeoisie, usually unstable and undecided, and which includes petty traders, craftsmen and "intellectuals" (students, civil servants, office clerks etc.);
- 3) the peasantry, considered as an integral part of the petty bourgeoisie, though poorer and more exploited than the latter and constituting the numerically more significant force within the Revolution; and,
- 4) the lumpen-proletariat, impoverished and marginalized city-dwellers and an easy prey to counterrevolutionary movements.

This "dictatorship" or prioritisation of the proletariats by Sankara's government was targeted and deliberate, and Harsch (2013: 364) comments that,

Most striking was an overall shift away from the cities and towards the countryside. The government provided poor farmers and livestock herders with more extensive public services, productive inputs, price incentives, marketing assistance, irrigation, environmental protection and other support. In the five-year plan, 71% of investments in the productive sectors was allocated to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, wildlife and forests (Ministère de la planification 1985, 269).

Sankara argued that the Burkinabe revolution “means repression of the exploiters, of our enemies, it must mean only persuasion for the masses – persuasion to take on a conscious and determined commitment” (Prairie 2007: 397). Further adding to the discourse on why Sankara argued for ‘dictatorship’ of the people, that is, the oppressed classes, Mr Ben explained that,

The revolution always takes side and the revolution of President Sankara chose the people's side. That is why some said the people were divided into two. There was the people and the enemies of the people, those wanting to take advantage and exploit the people. If you take the side of the popular masses, naturally you will do a popular politic.

These lays bare the class antagonisms and dialectics that characterised Burkinabe society following the delicate “social surgery” in the form of August 1983 Revolution. Mr Ambassador (pseudonym), who was one of the high-ranking people I interviewed, a Burkina Faso Ambassador to one of the countries passionately mentioned that,

[Sankara] was a dictator for the West but a leader for us. I do not know what does dictatorship means. For us he was a leader, he was a head [of state] and he would say do so and so and we follow. For if one says it is democratic, people can be asked what they want and even if what they want might not be good, it should still be done. You can say that Sankara's method has a name and was called dictatorship of the proletariat, that is dictatorship of many, of the poor. It was not a democracy.

Theme 5: Merging Theory with Practice

Sankara (2016: 67) simply explains the notion of theory (revolutionary theory) – praxis nexus by asserting that “knowing how to link revolutionary theory to revolutionary practice will be the decisive criterion from now on in distinguishing consistent revolutionaries from all those who flock to the revolution under motives that are alien to the revolutionary cause”. Perhaps

what sets Sankara apart from many other revolutionaries and neo-colonial (mis)leaders is his unique and seemingly innate ability to link theory and practice in a contextually relevant and nuanced manner. The fact that Sankara was an avid reader, in the manner explained by Mr Lipad and others, meant that he was well armed with theoretical and philosophical understanding of what the contending forces and classes were in Burkina Faso and how best to tackle them from an intellectual and realism perspective. This, combined with his charismatic character that was underpinned by his action orientated approach to governance, set Sankara apart from many renowned leaders in Africa and I must hasten to add, globally as well.

Martin (1987: 79) paints a clear picture of how Sankara viewed and juxtaposed theory and practice in the Burkina revolution:

Both thinker and doer, Thomas Sankara is not content with just enunciating a comprehensive and coherent political doctrine; he also tries, with various degrees of success, to put his thoughts into practice. To that extent, he observes one of the supreme principles of Marxism-Leninism, unity of theory and praxis: Theory without practice is pointless, practice without theory is blind. Theory indicates the way and helps to find the most efficient means of achieving practical objectives." Incidentally, this reminds us of Marx's celebrated dictum: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point, however, is to change it".

Mr Faye sheds some light on what he believes many people misunderstand about Sankara's ideological inclinations and how he perceived the theory-praxis nexus. He said,

...there is something that is forgotten or misrepresented by most people about Sankara. He was not an ideological person as such. He leaned towards leftist politics of course. Marxist often wanted him to wear that label because they wanted to put a strait jacket approach on reality. That is, for them the reality had to match the theory. Sankara was rather concerned about the lived conditions for Burkinabe people, what needed to be changed and what can I learn from theory to change this reality. He knew about all those theories, but for him the reality was the departure and the theories were tools to understand the reality. If they don't match (reality and theory), then the theory is out. Ideologies are tools, they are not templates that you have to apply.

Sankara's Deeds as his Writings

As initially alluded to in the preceding sections and chapters, Sankara was not degreed, yet he was highly educated; he was a self-taught intellectual and thought leader. Therefore, unlike some of his predecessors and peers like Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, etc, Sankara did not systematically write down his ideas, thoughts and philosophies. For instance, he did not have time to write his autobiography if it was something he would even have been amenable to considering because he was unorthodox in his methods and did not like to be seen to be self-glorifying. He abhorred being put on a higher pedestal. It is in this regard that Mr Maristo argues that,

Thomas Sankara was inspired by others' ideology but his difference was his discourse at the highest level and the practice. He was not joking with practice. There was the theory, he came to incarnate the practice. One can even say that was the speciality of Thomas Sankara, which was the incarnation of practice; otherwise it is not that he has developed an original ideology [per se]. For him the unification of Africa must be economic, military and political and that is all.

Sankara learned from great African leaders and scholars that came before him. He was simply marching forward with the torch and putting to action and practice what other African leaders had spoken and theorised about. His was a renaissance of a different kind, after learning from Diop, Ki-Zerbo and Nkrumah. This response by Mr Maristo is emphatic on Sankara being more practical and pragmatic. He was an implementer, implementation orientated at all times and at all costs. Indeed, this is what set him and his revolution apart from other great African leaders and revolutions, he was more emphatic on practice at rapid speed. He did not believe that we had to wait for Foreign Direct Investments or anybody else for our problems to be solved. As a devoted Pan Africanist and Afrocentrist that he was (even though he did not use these words to describe himself), he unequivocally believed in African Solutions for African Problems (ASAP).

Mr Ben is of the view that Sankara did not write much of his thoughts in books etc, was problematic as this may leave room for a lot of speculation about what he stood for ideologically and otherwise. He contends that,

...the problem with Sankara is that he did not write much like Che Guevara and Nkwame Nkrumah. Sankara did not have the time to write and for a long time, all that

pertained to Sankara was banned by Blaise Compaore. Even here you could not wear a Sankara's T-shirt but today you witness Sankara's movies, Sankara's songs, Sankara's theatre, Sankara's political parties. Sankara is everywhere.

In addition to the lack of systematic writings by Sankara himself about the Burkina Faso Revolution and his governance model(s), the suppression of his name and legacy by the Blaise Compaore government which sought to erase his memory in Burkina Faso and the world, dealt a great blow to Sankara's image and ideas for close to three decades of Compaore's rule.

Sister X, who is Sankara's relative, reminiscing about how Sankara, tried by all means to ensure that his actions matched words, said

He was rigorous not only toward himself but also toward his relatives, his family, wife and children. Similar for his brothers and sisters. There was no way of taking advantage of the fact that he was the president and if you were looking for trouble dare to use his name for [certain undue] gains. As he used to say, everyone has his identity card which was neither collective, nor familial but individual. He would say my name is Thomas, your name is [X], your name is [Y] and so on. One could not generalise to say, I was the brother of... the sister of... no, no this could not work with him.

This clearly shows a man whose words (theory) were in tandem with his actions (practice). Again, the essence of this example is that Sankara believed nothing comes easy, we all should work for things we need irrespective of our proximity to those in power, privileges or riches. His family and relatives were no exception to this principled view.

Systematic Delinking from France and Other Imperial Powers

Samir Amin (1991), explaining why it is important for countries of the Global South as a whole (Burkina Faso included) to delink from France and other capitalist imperial countries in the world, says this process is important because only then can countries of the Global South truly claim to be sovereign beyond political flag independence.

Many people and leaders in Francophone West Africa still see France as their 'surrogate mother' and whatever that emanates from French culture is still adored and respected. This colonial bondage with the former colonial master goes deep into the political, economic, epistemological, cultural, and social life of Francophone countries and Burkina Faso is no

exception. For Sankara, this psychological bondage had to end and the colonial umbilical cord that binds the erstwhile slave master (France) and the slave (Burkina Faso) had to be severed with immediate effect. One student from the second FGD with postgraduate student leaders lamented this parasitic relationship:

There is this professor from a University in Germany who used to say that he did not understand why, when our rulers were in Germany for a mission, they will travel to France before returning home and they believe that when they leave government, they will settle there. So, for them France is like an El Dorado, a motherland that educated them and that they feel compelled to be grateful to such motherland.

This is an accurate description of how many African leaders continue to glorify their former colonisers, even over five decades after political independence. They still feel beholden on their tormenters.

As an indication that Sankara was a man of action, who merged it with theoretical understanding so that the action is not misinformed, one of the senior students during FGDs explained Sankara's leadership thus:

This also, was part of his leadership's traits and our current and future leaders must put all these parameters together to reach that level of leadership, for these are not to be neglected. Do not be lazy, be cultured, build trust in people by becoming a responsible being and be a practical man ready to move from words to deeds in everything you are involved in. That is my opinion.

In pursuing an endogenous, self-propelled and planned economy, Sankara wanted to establish a solid economic foundation so that they could withstand and better absorb the looming economic blows that his country would experience from the West. Therefore, one of such building blocks had to ensure that Burkina Faso attained food sovereignty as soon as possible. One such area that Sankara was very cautious to delay in his efforts of aggressively cutting ties with France was leaving the CFA Franc Zone currency which is pegged to the France currency at a fixed rate of 1 Euro = 655.957 CFA Francs (Kamga, 2018). The Cameroonian economist, Joseph Tchundjang Pouemi (1981) said these profound words about France's control of its former colonies monetary systems; "*France is the only country in the world to have achieved the extraordinary success of circulating its currency – only its currency, in a politically free country.*"

Amber Murrey (2019) reveals that Thomas Sankara and Samir Amin had been in contact in efforts to build Burkina Faso. By reaching out to this intellectual giant (Amin) Sankara sought to get some advice from eminent and erudite African revolutionary scholars such as Amin. Murrey (2019: 11) explains that “the late Egyptian Pan-African political economist, Samir Amin, was among those invited to join Sankara and travel the countryside. Amin was invited several times by Thomas Sankara to visit the country and to offer his perspective and insights into the revolutionary process.”

Authenticity in Policy Making

The concept of policy transfer is normal practice in public policy. Hare (2017:1) defines policy transfer as “the process by which knowledge about policies or programs in one place is used in another place”. However, many countries in Africa tend to ‘borrow’ policies from the West, mainly Euro-America and the inverse hardly occurs. Even worse is that many of these African countries that are often on the receiving end on policy transfer, barely even tweak policies they borrowed, they at times just copy and paste them as they are, devoid of the obvious differences in contexts and needs of their societies. Unintended consequences therefore become the end result of such policies that have no ecological relevance and validity.

Harsch (2013:365) gives a cogent illustration of how Sankara’s government opted for unorthodox policies, that is, the third way: “The government welcomed whatever external aid it could get. However, Planning Minister Youssouf Ouedraogo insisted that such aid would no longer be the ‘determining factor’ in the government’s priorities. The CNR also explicitly rejected the programmes of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, largely because of their neoliberal policy prescriptions”. Le Pays (15 October 2007) and Sidwaya (15 October 2007), both cited in Harsch (2013: 365), explain that “neoliberalism, academics and activists argued at an international symposium in Ouagadougou on the twentieth anniversary of his death that Sankara could be considered a precursor of ‘altermondialisation’, that is, of those who today champion alternatives to capitalist globalisation”. Another crucial and environmentally sensitive policy of agro-ecology was to be rolled out by Sankara. Agro-ecological pioneer, Pierre Rabhi, who worked in Burkina in the 1980s, explains that Sankara ‘wanted to make agro-ecology a national policy’, but this was not fully realised due to his untimely death in 1987 (Murrey, 2016).

Related to Sankara's originality in policy making and implementing, Mr Fay suggests that;

Sankara could also be labelled by many as a fiscally conservative President because of the self-induced austerity measures he took in order to finance endogenous development that would not be at the mercy of foreign capital and investments. He believed that the state could not spend what it did not have."

This fiscal policy approach by Sankara was quite different to many in Africa because he knew the consequences of debt on their sovereignty and their ability to make policies without foreign intervention. Another innovative policy intervention Sankara introduced in Burkina Faso was to link national security (the army) with endogenous development economic policy.

How did he do this? Harsch (2014: 65-66) answers this question thus:

Sankara's earlier experiment in linking military training with public service and development work was made systematic. Military bases around the country started farms to grow food and raise live-stock, engaged in tree planting to combat deforestation, cleaned up trash from towns and villages, dug wells and built schools, health clinics, roads and other facilities...By farming, Sankara told me in 1984, soldiers would be further reminded of how ordinary Burkinabe labour and suffer, so that they would continue seeing themselves as part of the people, not members of a privileged group. "This is how we are going to produce a new mentality in the army" [Sankara's own words here].

This is testimony to the fact that Sankara's policies were dynamic, responsive to the needs of the people, and creative and bold.

Theme 6: Sankara was Ahead of his Time

Considering his age, background, and the way he assumed power in August 1983, Thomas Sankara achieved, in my view, a lot for Burkina Faso in just four years than what other African countries have achieved in more than fifty years of independence. This is because, in part, everything he did in trying to uplift the lives of Burkinabe's was always time bound as if he knew that he did not have the luxury of time to build Burkina Faso. In as much as this fast-paced approach to doing things meant that he made a lot of mistakes, it also helped his government achieve a lot at the same time. Because of his passion for women emancipation

and the environment, some even refer to him as a revolutionary feminist and an environmentalist respectively. He advocated for these issues way before many countries (even developed ones) took them seriously and gave them the attention they required. That is why I argue under this theme and section that he lived before his time and acted beyond his tender age.

A Philosopher and a Religious Being

Thomas Sankara grew up in a religious family and he was a member of the Roman Catholic church. Mr Fidelity, one of Sankara's childhood friend who later became Minister in Sankara's cabinet mentioned that

Sankara was a Catholic Christian. The history of Jesus influenced him as well, the humanism of Christ which posits that human beings are brothers, and these influenced Sankara who nearly became a (Catholic) priest. He was a server at the [church] mass, and with his knowledge about history we were all impressed by world social movements.

Mr Fidelity continued, saying that, “*when referring to Thomas Sankara, it also implies social and historical facts, a philosopher and even a religious being.*”

When asked a question by Jean-Phillipe Rapp, a Swiss journalist, in 1985, on what he would do if the big hegemons withdraw their funding or aid to Burkina Faso, Sankara replied in this philosophical manner:

From imperialism's point of view, it's more important to dominate us culturally than militarily. Cultural domination is more flexible and effective, less costly. This is why we say that to overturn the Burkinabe regime, you don't need to bring in heavily armed mercenaries. You just need to forbid the import of champagne, lipstick, and nail polish (Sankara, 2016: 162-163).

The comparison of soft power in the form of cultural domination with hard/direct power in the form of military invasion/domination by imperialist is quite profound. This shows that Sankara was able to think on his feet and make connections between issues easily and in a philosophical manner as well.

Answering another question from the same journalist about what he would like his legacy to be after his death, Sankara gave a deeply thought provoking and philosophical response saying that,

Maybe in our lifetime it will seem like tilting at windmills. But perhaps we are blazing the trail along which, tomorrow, others will surge forward cheerfully, without even thinking – as we do when we walk. We place one foot in front of the other without even questioning, though all our movements are subject to a complex set of laws having to do with the balance of our bodies, speed, pace, and rhythm. It will be a real consolation to me and my comrades if we've been able to be useful in some regard, if we've been able to be pioneers. Provided, of course, we are able to get that consolation where we are going (ibid: 197-198).

He was Anti Personality Cults

In his book titled, *Thomas Sankara: An African Revolutionary*, Harsch (2014: 146) explains how Sankara reacted to his proposal to write a book about Sankara's speeches and interviews: "Some months before the October 1987 coup, a colleague of mine presented to Sankara my proposal for a book of speeches, interviews" and other documents from the revolutionary process in Burkina Faso. Sankara liked the overall idea. But he objected that the proposal focused too much on him. "The story of our revolution needs to be told, so that the world can know what we are trying to achieve," he told my colleague. "But I'm not this revolution, and cannot be the only one to carry this revolution. If this is the case, then we don't have a revolution." Sankara's words are a clear demonstration of how he did not want to be idolised, that is why he felt a book should rather be about the revolutionary process itself and all stakeholders, instead of using him as the face and "pop star" of the revolution.

The fact that the revolution was practically halted, and eventually died as a result of the "rectification" (read as reversal) of Blaise Compaore after Sankara was assassinated raises more questions than answers. Did the concerns and fears Sankara raised when he said he was not the revolution, actually materialise because after his death, there was no leader from the CNR, CDRs or from the general population that steadfastly stood firm in trying to continue the revolutionary process and path that Sankara had charted? Of course, this is mentioned in cognisance of the fact that Blaise was working hard to repress anyone who was seen to be

sympathetic to the Sankarian cause, to the extent where mere mention of Sankara's name was made to be taboo and would get one killed. Notwithstanding this, there was no real push back from the same popular masses such as peasants that Sankara so believed in and fought for. Why did Blaise Compaore rule Burkina Faso for nearly three decades, whereby in the first few years of being President he reversed all the gains that Sankara had made by taking Burkina Faso back to the sacrificial altar of the Bretton Woods institutions so that it became a beggar nation again? Perhaps these questions and chain of events after the Burkina Faso Revolution died together with Sankara on 15 October 1987, and may suggest that there was no real revolution after all in Burkina Faso in the period 1983-1987. Perhaps Sankara was letting us in that if the revolution can only be identifiable with him and lies on his shoulders alone, then "if this is the case then we don't have a revolution" (Harsch (2014: 146) because when he died, that also marked the end of the Burkina Faso Revolution.

Mr Fay, reflecting on the day he met Sankara in 1986, cheerfully reminisced about how he felt:

I met him in March 1986, at the height of his Presidency. I was from Senegal at the time as a young student leader who was eager to meet revolutionaries. I was very impressed by his simplicity. He did not approach me as a President of Burkina Faso but as a big brother. He did not speak formally to me as I had expected from a President, he asked me with a smile, "bro, what are you doing here in Burkina Faso?" He did not come out as a 'President', he came out as an ordinary person. That was a shock to me. He made me feel that he was not 'drunk' with power. He made me understand that he was just a person who happened to be a President, not a President who happened to be a person. It was fascinating meeting someone who has been your idol and he made me feel that I should get the idea of idolizing him out of my mind. He was just a human being doing what he believed in, he was not like a super human, ok. I understood that me too I could do what he was doing, that was the main lesson, as I reflect on him and that day.

This is a sobering account of how simple, approachable and in touch with the people Sankara was. He despised personality cults with the same veracity that he despised corruption and imperialists with.

Women Advocacy/Emancipation

Issues of women upliftment, equality and equity occupied an important role in Sankara's political thought. Among the top three priority policy interventions that he outlines in his political orientation speech which became one of the most programmatic speeches he made during his Presidency, women emancipation came second after the national economy policies. Therefore, this sub-theme is one of the most important as it gives us some insight into what Sankara thought about the place of women in the revolution and how he thought the general public should treat and perceive women as one of the historically marginalised groups in society.

Reflecting on Sankara's thought and action with respect to women freedoms, McFadden (2018: 175), one of the renowned African feminist scholars in Africa, observed:

As I read, I re-read his writings recently with a more mature understanding of the power and resilience of radical and with a better understanding of how 'before his time' he was, I realised just how courageous Sankara was, as a black man and as a male revolutionary. There is no other black radical man – intellectual or political leader, or both – who has articulated and insisted upon the advanced gender-inclusive ideas and policies that Sankara advocated for and implemented. His goal was not to initiate the process of emancipation for women in Burkina Faso; he did a commendable job contributing to this project during his short stay at the helm of the nation state.

For Sankara to be unreservedly commended by leading feminist scholars such as Prof McFadden in this manner is itself evidence enough that he was genuinely concerned about the plight of women, because Prof McFadden is always very critical of all men.

During his address of some thousands of women in Ouagadougou during International Women's Day celebrations of March 1987, Sankara made powerful and introspective remarks. One such remark was when he said that, "the revolution's promises are already a reality for men. But for women, they are still merely a rumour. And yet the authenticity and the future of our revolution depend on women" (Sankara, 2016: 260). As a devoted Pan Africanist thinker who was not myopic in his analyses, Sankara was able to link women struggles with their position in the economy, with culture, and with the global system of capitalism. He continued, in this same speech, arguing that, "we must understand how the struggle of Burkinabe` women today is part of the worldwide struggle of all women...The condition of women is therefore at

the heart of the question of humanity itself...Her oppression is a direct reflection of her economic oppression” (ibid: 262, 265). One wonders to what extent the women who were listening to him speak that day and heard him speak on radio on women struggles, were able to grasp the complex, intellectually sound and historically grounded analyses that he often made in his speeches.

Mr Ambassador, commenting on Sankara’s position and actions in tackling women injustices in Burkina Faso said,

Women were like merchandise. I could rise and take the daughter of my junior brother and give her to someone and my daughter was like an object. I do not even mention sexual abuses, circumcision and others. Ladies were told, “you will marry so and so and just leave.” It is Thomas that brought an end to that. He also limited and fought against polygamy. There are Muslims in this country and when it comes to polygamy, Thomas said it was a bad thing. He did not like polygamists and myself who is his uncle, I had two wives, but he only acknowledged the first wife and he used to go there to eat. There is another wife seating here [at his house] and it is my second wife and he never came here. He once asked me whether that second wife of mine could go and look for a young man on the ground that I was older.

Sankara felt very strong about women issues like rape, arranged marriages, women circumcision, and their general objectification, hence he banned all these practices, even those that were practiced under the pretext of culture and or religion.

Mayanja (2018: 213), making an analysis of Sankara’s gendered political philosophy, argues that “Sankara combined the feminist and womanist approach to construct his gendered philosophy, inviting men and women to collaborate in altering a normalised and naturalised status quo that enslaves and oppresses women, preventing them from playing their role in politics and economics...”. Mayanja (2018: 217) further adds, comparing Sankara with other leaders, that,

Unlike many rulers and leaders, who merely ‘pay lip service’ to gender equality, Sankara honoured International Women’s Day, appointed women into government positions and in the revolutionary army, created the Ministry of Family Development and the Union of Burkina Women (UFB) and amended the constitution making it mandatory for presidents to have at least five women as ministers in cabinet.’

Not only did Sankara speak strongly against women oppression and marginalisation, he used the state (through policy and laws) as an instrument to empower women and to implore them to fight for their own freedom because freedom is never given on a silver platter. Much like Frederick Douglass (1857), Sankara knew very well that, “this struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will”.

Sankara, a Devoted Advocate for “People-to-People Pan Africanism”

Pan Africanism is often times pitched at an ideological and intellectual level by many political leaders. Thomas Sankara opted for the less travelled road in that in state of merely focusing on the normal state-to-state Pan Africanism, which is also important, he rather emphasised the need for more people-centred Pan Africanism. The speech Sankara made in 1984, in Harlem, New York, titled, “*Our White House is in Black Harlem*”, is perhaps the most important speech that gives us a glimpse into Sankara’s Pan Africanist thought, and to some extent, that gives us an idea about what his government’s foreign policy was premised on. In this speech, speaking to a crowd of over 500 people, Sankara said,

Do you know why we organised the Bold Union manoeuvres with Ghana? It was to show imperialism what we are capable of in Africa. Many other African countries prefer to organise their military manoeuvres jointly with foreign powers. When we hold our next manoeuvres, there should be fighters from Harlem to come to participate with us (Sankara, 2016: 127-128).

This extract explains that Sankara was not just a continental Pan Africanist who sought unification of African states at the exclusion of people of African descent the world over. He did not only pledge solidarity with African Americans and other African countries like Ghana, but he practically committed and acted on his words as evidenced by this speech.

Another important example that demonstrates how serious Sankara was about Pan Africanism and closer ties and collaboration between African countries and people is his tough and clear stance on Apartheid. Mr Fidelity, one of Sankara childhood friend and Minister in his cabinet disclosed that,

The first documents, National ID [were assigned to] Mandela and Winnie, Passports were firstly Mandela and Winnie. If there was census, the Mandela's name was well displayed and Thomas Sankara never got tired repeating that process because he knew that someday, Apartheid will end and that Mandela will rise to power. Thabo Mbeki was a man that Thomas Sankara was flying all the time with; he introduced him to other heads of state as the future ruler of South Africa and it all came to pass like a prophecy. You can see that Thomas Sankara's main concern was the happiness of other people.

This revelation implies that Sankara was not bothered about the colonial borders that continue to divide Africa, he saw all Africans as fellow citizens.

Mr Ben, adding to the discourse on Sankara's internationalist and Pan African outlook, explains that, *"to show his support to South Africa against imperialism, Sankara offered two Kalashnikovs⁴⁶ to Nelson Mandela. It did not mean much, but this was a symbol of our commitment to South Africans expressing our readiness to fight against apartheid and stand by their side, even militarily."* This symbolic show of support, by offering two guns to the ANC to fight the Apartheid government, from a poor small landlocked country like Burkina Faso, speaks volumes about Sankara's Pan African commitment to liberation of all Africans. Mr Theo, further corroborating Mr Ben's input on the offering on weapons by Sankara to the ANC said; *"...Yes, he sent the ANC about two AK47 weapons (because he did not have money) as a symbolic gesture of his solidarity with them in their fight against Apartheid. He was a true Pan Africanist. He was seeing beyond the borders of Burkina Faso."* Clearly, these respondents describe Sankara as a Pan Africanist par excellence.

Theme 7: Afrocentric Leadership

Through the application of Afrocentricity theory in this study, Sankara's leadership approaches and traits were better distilled and brought to the fore.⁴⁷ This is because Sankara's remarks that the only way for one to live free and with dignity is for them to embrace their Africanity, can best be understood at a theoretical, conceptual and practical level through the lenses and deployment of the Afrocentric theoretical framework which also privileges and emphasises the

⁴⁶AKA 47 guns.

⁴⁷ These Afrocentric leadership traits that Sankara possessed include but are not limited to the following: determination, conviction, courageous, pragmatic, principled, integrity, charismatic, innovative, versatile, humane, self-taught, diligent etc. For detailed summary of these traits, see Appendix G.

African cultures, norms and practices. As expounded on in the theoretical framework chapter, Afrocentricity means “a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person [...]. It centres on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people; culture, economics, psychology, health and religion” (Asante, 1991: 172). This theme therefore reports different aspects of Sankara’s thoughts and actions that demonstrate that he was an Afrocentric thought leader.

Cultural Renaissance: Culture as the Epicentre of Development Efforts

The act of naming and re-naming is an act of culture. On the one hand, it can mean cultural subjugation when original names are replaced with foreign names as in the case of European invaders renaming countries, people and their natural resources like rivers and mountains. On the other hand, it can mean cultural renaissance and affirmation when naming is done in accordance with people’s histories and customs or when previous colonially imposed names are changed to original or culturally sensitive and historically nuanced names (see Wa Thiong’o, 1981). A case in point for the latter scenario is when Thomas Sankara changed the colonial name of Upper Volta to Burkina Faso. While in Harlem opening an exhibition of Burkinabè art in 1984, Sankara explained the significance of re-naming his country: “We have decided to change names. This comes at a time of rebirth for us. We wanted to kill off Upper Volta in order to allow Burkina Faso to be reborn. For us, the name Upper Volta symbolises colonialization...” (Sankara, 2016: 122).

Mr Lipad gives an extensive explanation of how the name Burkina Faso was arrived at and the impact Sankara had on Burkina’s identity formation and its cultural rebirth:

He was very instrumental in fostering a strong Burkinabe identity, for example, green beans consumption, Faso Dan Fani clothing promotion, working towards having your own house, produce what you consume, giving Upper Volta a new name. Burkina Faso comes from two major languages in Burkina Faso. More’ and Dioula languages are two major languages in Burkina. Burkina = Integrity (More`) + Faso = Fatherland (Dioula). The idea behind the name is to unify different ethnic groups in Burkina. More`, Fulani, and Dioula are the three main languages in Burkina Faso. Dioula is an ethnic group and a language. Burkinabe = the suffix ‘be’ means ‘from’ in Fulani language. Peulh is the ethnic group that speaks Fulani.

Sankara's insistence that Burkinabe` culture be resuscitated shows that he was grounded and guided by an Afrocentric epistemology. However, in as much as Sankara was an advocate of African cultural restoration, he was also cognisant that there are other African/Burkinabe cultural practices that were oppressive to some sectors of society and those he banned.

In line with the Afrocentric paradigm, Sankara introduced "a programme of reforestation, a positive act to regenerate nature. We've decreed every village and town must have a grove of trees" (Sankara, 2016: 122). Sankara then continues to explain the Afrocentric inspiration of how they came to such a decision and decree by drawing from their cultural arsenal of wisdom: "As part of its socio-economic system, African tradition included a form of preservation of nature called the sacred woods" (ibid). Mr Theo also adds that, "*Sankara was very committed to the culture, he used to have what was called 'the national culture week'. For one-week people from different ethnicities around the country would gather in one city/area to celebrate their cultures through music, arts. To this day it still continues.*" It is interesting and encouraging that his cultural legacy of national culture week outlived him, as it continued to be practiced to this day in Burkina Faso.

Elevation of Burkina Languages as Academic Languages

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981: 13), one of the most respected African scholar-activists on the importance of African languages, explains the dual character of language thus, "language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture." Wa Thiong'o further explains the symbiotic relationship between language, culture, identity and our being as a people. He argues that,

...language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature; the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world (ibid: 16).

Thomas Sankara, therefore, would have premised his decision to elevate the importance of Burkina languages in schools and in business because he understood the intrinsic relationship between language, culture and development as a whole. Again, this decision would not have

made sense to Sankara if he was conscious of the Sankofa Approach and Afrocentricity which compels one to look back into our cultural history so as to create a future that is not alien to our being as Africans. Skinner (1988: 444) points out that Sankara's attempts to infuse Burkina vernacular languages in the primary schools' curricula failed because;

...many educators felt that the children would be cut off from the cultural patrimony of the entire world. His proposals for changing higher education also failed, because although the students initially welcomed the revolutionary rhetoric about building a new society, they themselves were not prepared to make any real sacrifices: limitations on the number of scholarships for study abroad were resented, as well as restrictions on programmes of studies.

Indeed, it would seem that Sankara's vision of not only building an economically sovereign country, but also epistemologically independent was superficially understood even by some in academic/educational sectors.

He Liked Ancient African Quotes and Proverbs

When asked by Jean-Philippe Rapp, a Swiss journalist, in 1985, why he liked using symbols in his speeches and interviews, Sankara's response was a clear indication that he drew strength and wisdom from those that came before him and from Burkinabe` ancient culture. He responded as follows: “

This is a pedagogic style, the product of our reality. As you will have noticed, we not only speak a great deal, we also give very long answers and, as you say, we're fond of symbols. This is because the speeches are directed to listeners who are accustomed to the oral tradition of African civilisation, where speech progresses with many twists and turns (Sankara, 2016: 185).

It is also interesting that Sankara explicitly mentions who his speeches are primarily intended for, and those are the layperson, rural country men and women of Burkina Faso. This is in stark contrast to many African leaders whose speeches are often times meant to appease and grab the attention of Western powers and International conglomerates in the name of trying to attract foreign direct investment.

Mr Ambassador, when asked about Sankara's knowledge of African history and cultures, delightedly said,

Sankara was someone who knew African culture. Hold on, he did not know all the cultures; he knew that of his region, his ethnic group but he respected others' cultures and was seeking to discover what they are all about. Then he liked proverbs and quotes from the ancients of Africa. He was seeking explanations. Now looking at an example, he said that "there is no race whether from Africa or elsewhere that does not know how to laugh or cry, we all have the same feelings". So, one does not need to be told that so and so is good or bad, we should know it. And we have to come up with conditions so that when we say that it is good, this be true. He used wisdom and culture to define the current environment, that is to make sure that people do not feel like strangers to themselves and their surroundings.

This remark by Mr Ambassador shows that Sankara knew and had an appreciation for African cultures and their re-centering in all we did as Africans. Again, it also implies that he believed in the inherent ability of man to think and reason. Lastly, we see that culture was to Sankara what water is to fish. His use of cultural proverbs and idioms was meant to bring the masses close to him so that they do not feel alienated. They were to see themselves and their plight in him. That is why he also used simple terms while explaining complex political and economic issues during rallies and meetings with ordinary working-class people, peasants, and the illiterate.

Sankara Valued Education

Despite the fact that Sankara was only formally trained in military science as a soldier, in Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and in France, he had an innate passion for education and books. In the same interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, who asked him if he was not afraid that his plans and regime "tomorrow could all be over", he was unfazed by such a possibility. He said, "No, that kind of fear I don't have. I've told myself: either I'll finish up an old man somewhere in a library reading books, or I'll meet with a violent end, since we have so many enemies" (Sankara, 2016: 201). Sankara's love for books says a lot about his love for knowledge generation and consumption, but also about how much he valued education. When Sankara came to power, illiteracy rate in Burkina Faso was amongst the highest in the world at about 88% (ibid). When asked how he would solve that problem, Sankara (ibid: 191) mentioned that, "with regards to education we intend to attack both the container and its content. [By] injecting new values into our schools so that they can produce a new man who understands ideas, who

absorbs them, and functions in total harmony with the dynamic evolution of his people”. Sankara further explained that access to education was, until the revolution came, a privilege of a few but they sought to change that by democratising education, which entailed, amongst others, building more schools across the country (ibid).

Addressing the plight of peasants and their illiteracy rate, Sankara (1984: 50) explained that,

These peasants, the source of our wealth, suffer most from the lack of schools and educational equipment for their children. It is their children who will swell the ranks of the unemployed after a brief time in schools which teach them nothing about their own reality and their own country. Illiteracy is highest among them (98 per cent). Those who have the greatest need of knowledge, to improve their productivity, are the very ones who profit least from the investments made in health, education and technology.

This evidence suggests that Sankara was aware that education can help change for the better, the lives of the most downtrodden peasants. It would help end their exploitation and relegation to second-class citizens. The fact that Sankara’s government fired over 1500 teachers in 1984 for staging an illegal strike, may seem like a contradiction to Sankara’s words and commitment to education. Sankara’s argument was that the strike (according to intelligence information they received) was part of a political destabilisation campaign that would precede a planned coup in Burkina Faso and Ghana (ibid).

During the interviews, Mr Ambassador commented on the issue of accessibility of education during Sankara’s time at the helm of government, by saying that, “*people were very happy, for they could send their children to school; even our parents from Ivory Coast, sent their children here to study because it was affordable. All these children you can see are the diaspos*”.⁴⁸

Theme 8: Basis of Sankara’s Thinking: Produce What You Consume

The fundamental basis for the prioritisation of food sovereignty in Burkina Faso is that the revolution could not be successfully sustained if the country could not feed itself. Furthermore, if Burkina continued being net importers of basic food, that weakness could have easily been used against the revolutionary government of Sankara to settle political scores and ideological differences by imperial forces. It must also be noted that when Sankara spoke about producing

⁴⁸Meaning from the diaspora, mainly from Ivory Coast and other nearby countries like Mali.

what you consume and consuming what you produce, this was not only limited to food production. It also included things like epistemological production and consumption of knowledge, cultural production and consumption, and I would hasten to add, production and consumption of spirituality for the soul. In essence, Sankara started emphasising that Burkinabe people had to be self-sufficient in their basic necessities, but ultimately, he wanted Burkina Faso and Africa as a whole, to produce and consume all it required so that it could cease being a beggar continent, and therefore restore its dignity and past glory since antiquity.

Mr Lipad is of the view that the basis of Sankara's thinking and development strategy was Pan Africanism. He gives a hypothetical yet realistic example that explains, in part why there is low intra-Africa trade, which calls for a renewed urgent need for Pan Africanism:

Let's talk about markets because we are talking about development. If you grow peanuts or tomatoes 10km from Ghana, and they need them on the other side (Ghana), just because we are using a different system (Francophone), you won't be allowed. Also, because we are using different monetary systems (We are in CFA zone). All this was made and designed purposefully to cut the ties we could have with one another. Pan Africanism that Nkrumah and others advocated for wanted to overcome these barriers. Thomas Sankara as well has built all his thinking and development strategy on that.

Agrarian Revolution: Food Sovereignty

For food sovereignty to be achieved in Burkina Faso in less than the short four years that Sankara was President, radical agrarian reforms had to be speedily introduced and at the core of them was the nationalisation of land which immediately became the sole property of the state. Ordinance (No. 84-050-CNR-PRES) gave effect to this land reform process that sought to drastically change the agrarian system and power patterns in Burkina Faso (Matlon, 1993). It goes without saying that many of these sweeping changes directly affected many people, and the hardest hit were traditional leaders who lost all powers and privileges to land rights, distribution and authority. In addition, the bourgeoisie who used to own tracts of land were also some of the hardest hit. The biggest winners were of course the peasants and poor working-class people in rural areas and town who did not have access to land for a range of uses.

Speirs (1991: 103) explains that,

...the introduction of an agrarian reform, through which all land in Burkina Faso became the property of the state and the formation of CDRs in the villages, also presented the government with serious difficulties focussing on the transfer of power away from the traditional chiefs. As young people in the rural areas became organized in the CDRs which assumed responsibility for allocating land, the authority of the chiefs was weakened.

As alluded to before, this means that powers of traditional leaders were curtailed with the introduction of these agrarian reforms and it led to some hostility between Sankara and traditional leaders in Burkina Faso to the extent that not only did they lose their privileges on land, they also were treated as any other citizen (i.e., they had to pay all amenities and services like electricity etc.)

Mr Fidelity narrated a powerful and touching story which sought to explain how food security was achieved in Burkina Faso, in part, through introduction of tariffs and banning of certain foods that were imported, which Burkina Faso were capable of producing internally. His narration went as follows:

Thomas was not at ease by seeing women coming from 30km from Ouagadougou with tomatoes they were unable to sell, which they would throw away around 17 o'clock to go back home by bicycle; for tomatoes were heavy [when riding] on the bicycle so they had to be thrown away. Meanwhile there were civil servants, salaried, city-dwellers who were in town to buy canned tomatoes for cooking. Even at the medical level, everyone knew that fraiche tomato grown here was better and he decided that at some point in time tomato would no longer be imported from outside, for there were enough tomatoes here and to organise ourselves to see how to have our own canned tomatoes.

Bans on certain food products were rolled out so as to boost internal production and consumption of fruits and vegetables from Burkina Faso. The ban of some imported food may also have triggered the hostile international perception about Sankara as this decision had a potential of taking jobs away from France workers and generating jobs for Burkinabe`. This, to the West, was a declaration of economic war by Burkina Faso against its former coloniser and other countries which were benefiting from her being an import-based economy.

An important question this study attempted to answer as it relates to Theme 8 and the first sub-theme specifically is: how did Burkina Faso attain food security in such a short period of time

as an arid country in the Sahel? Mr Fay gave a powerful example about how Sankara treated peasants, which contributed to Burkina's attainment of food security. He said,

I attended a big conference in 1987 where all Peasant leaders from Burkina were called to discuss the future of agriculture and they were booked hotels by the Sankara government. For many of them, they had never slept in a hotel and were surprised that they were not left to fend for themselves for accommodation."

This testimony is an indication that Sankara's government was a vanguard of the proletariats and peasants. They treated the poor and downtrodden masses of Burkinabe as the real VIPs and kings because it was through them that Burkina Faso could develop and grow its economy.

Mr Faye further detailed how food sovereignty was realised:

The government at the time tried to improve the ratio between production of essential consumable food like rice, mealies (staple food) and cotton (cash crops). The priority was to produce food to eat. That was the major shift that happened and improved prospects of Burkina Faso to achieve food security. Under the previous regimes, the priority was to produce more cotton, at the expense of consumable/edible food. Therefore, people did not have money to buy the imported food. That was the major agricultural policy shift. The government also made sure that fertilisers were easily accessible to the people at a cheaper price which was subsidised. Furthermore, young people were encouraged to go into the fields and be productive.

These interventions made food cheaper and affordable even to the poorest in society.

Speirs (1991:101) also adds that extensive austerity measures that came with a huge sacrifice from everyone on society played an important role: “

The 'popular investment effort' promoted by the CNR was accompanied by a series of austerity measures designed to reduce the budgetary deficit of the state and to transfer resources into the development of the agricultural sector. But the real incomes of state employees, including civil servants and teachers, were drastically affected by wage restrictions and by the imposition of compulsory levies to raise funds for the development programmes.

In addition to this, the military was transformed such that it became one with the people by ensuring that most barracks had hectares of land where they could farm, grow chicken and raise

livestock like cattle etc. Put different, the army was redesigned such that it formed an intrinsic part of the economy.

Embedding the army in Burkina society also meant that military service (which was compulsory) would take longer, from 18 months to two years. In this period, trainees would learn how to use weapons and learn about military science, but a huge chunk of the time (two thirds) was devoted on production (economic). By devotion to production, Sankara meant working in agriculture, some teaching in schools, others working as health-care worker etc (Sankara, 2016). As part of the austerity measures and in efforts to prevent a budget deficit so that the meagre resources saved could be re-directed to agricultural value chain and other sectors like education and healthcare, Sankara (ibid: 165) lowered salaries of civil servants and they forfeited some benefits. He explains that, “these are the kinds of sacrifices we impose on members of the government, of whom we *demand* an extremely modest lifestyle. A minister who is a school teacher receives a school teacher salary. The president who is a captain receives a captain’s salary, nothing more”. Only servant leaders could agree to an implement these sacrifices.

Mr Theo’s input on how food security was reached is that,

Sankara mobilised the people and taught them simple techniques on how to retain water. For instance, there is something called the ‘Zai technique’ in French. It involves digging small holes in the fields and since it does not rain much [in Burkina Faso], each time it rains the little water that gets into those holes is retained and it enriches the soil, this in turn helps to increase food production and the output becomes enormous.

This technique, combined with the small village dams that were built, played an enormous role in increasing food production.

Environmental Consciousness

Sankara was an environmentalist, long before issues of the environment such as climate change gained prominence. It can be argued that he in fact applied the principle of Maat Philosophy which hinges on the need for balance in the world for the universe to be in harmony with the people, plants, animals, the atmosphere, etc. Asked about the deterioration of the environment

in Burkina Faso due to desertification and deforestation by Jean-Philippe Rapp, Sankara (2016: 181-182) said that,

African societies are living through an abrupt rupture with their own culture, and we're adapting very badly to our new situation. Completely new economic approaches are required... We have to constantly remind every individual of his duty to maintain and regenerate nature. [Therefore] we have to come to the conclusion that we have only one solution: to take draconian measures.

Sankara then explained what these draconian measures entailed and they were summarily named, "The Three Battles". The first was that they had forbidden the 'unplanned, anarchic cutting of trees', the second was that they outlawed the roaming free of livestock unattended which was a normal practice in Burkina. The third battle was punitive measure that said that any animal found grazing on people's crops could be slaughtered on the spot without any need for trial (Sankara, 2016: 182-183).

When asked about the obvious problems that the third battle could present, Sankara was resolute about their decision to introduce such draconian interventions in order to preserve the environment by saying that, "I know I don't have the perfect solution. But even if this decision were only 60 per cent right, I would stick by it" (ibid). Mr Dami, on the environment and Sankara, said, *"...a third crucial part of the revolution is at the level of environmental pollution, the three fights [battles]. Today everyone is talking about ecological pollution. Sankara was the precursor... about the fact that climate change is dangerous. So, he started paying attention to the entire Burkina, to plant trees everywhere."*

Promotion and Production of Organically Produced Food

Mr Ben went at length detailing how the reversal of the revolution gains, what Blaise misleadingly called rectification of the revolution, was rolled out even to the extent where peasants were trapped into debt just to be able to produce agricultural products, post Sankara's assassination. He said,

Today, this politic materialises on the ground by way of driving peasants into debt through fertilisers. They farm and at the end of the season they have a lot of money and then the following day, this money is reinserted within the chain, fertilisers, pesticides as they start all over. Unprocessed cotton is exported and to dress oneself now one

cannot buy fabric from Paris but from China. Chinese perceived African markets differently, coming in with counterfeits that result in a difference in terms of quality. So, his question is very fundamental, for one cannot lead a revolution without risk. If you do not master production relations that is imperialism. If you are not strong enough others will suffocate you somehow.

The introduced fertilisers and pesticides that were meant to help increase production had two main disadvantages to the peasants and society at large. One, as explained by Mr Ben, they increased the costs of production of peasants who were already strained as all the support they used to receive during the revolution had stopped when Blaise took over power. But also, and most importantly, these high cost fertilisers and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) that they began using were sold to them on credit and therefore trapped them in a vicious circle of debt. Two, food that was produced from GMOs and inorganic fertilisers that peasants began using inevitably had negative health implications to the Burkinabe who consumed the food thereby worsening the health situation in Burkina Faso.

Sankara, as argued before, can be described as an environmentalist who “lived before his time” because of his foresight of the environmental degradation caused by pesticides and GMOs. Mr Lipad recalled that,

...he also encouraged people to produce organic fertilizers. This is extremely important because he knew already that time, that chemical fertilizers were not good for the environment in the long run, therefore this implies that he was vehemently against GMOs – Genetically Modified Organisms. This policy (produce cotton – produce maize) may be seen as draconian by some. However, for Sankara people don't have rights in vacuum, they have to be understood in context.

It is important to note that the “produce cotton – produce maize” policy that Sankara introduced was meant to balance the ratio of cash crops like cotton production with that of food production. This production of the former far out-weight the later since independence. This is one intervention, at a policy level, that helped Burkina Faso to be food self-sufficient that quickly.

Theme 9: All Sectors of the State Must be Revolutionised

Revolutions, in their nature, are meant to turn things up-side-down such that there is a complete overhaul of the previous system to make way for the new one. Therefore, it follows from this premise that all key sectors of the state, and even Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should also be shaken up and revolutionised. Reflecting on the four years since the assuming power in 1983, Sankara (2016: 324) said, “in four years of revolution, we’ve carried out many important revolutionary transformations. We’ve laid the basis for solving numerous problems facing our people. We’ve been very active across different sectors of our society. We’ve given the impression that we want to change everything, and do it immediately.” The last part of this extract shows that in as much as Sankara acknowledges that the revolution wanted to change everything, as it should, it could not all be done at the same, immediately, as they tried to do. This indicates that they had made some assessments of some of their weaknesses in the previous four years of the revolution.

Sankara's Government Gave New Meaning to Democracy and Elections

Buzz words such as democracy, good governance, and investors were viewed differently by Thomas Sankara and his democratic and popular revolution. They did not ascribe to the Western influenced and defined notions of these concepts. Theirs was participatory democratic governance which was anchored on Burkina cultural practices and their contextual needs. In an interview with Mohammed Maiga of *Afrique-Asia* in October 1983, Sankara defined democracy to mean “the freedom of expressions of a conscious majority, well informed of the issues and their internal and external implications, capable of verifying the fairness of electoral processes and in a position to influence their outcome” (Sankara, 1983).

Another meaning to democracy which is expressed in the governance approach that the Sankara government adopted is “Sankarism” which Yimovie (2018: 192) defines as “a philosophy grounded by the imperative of self-sufficiency and sustainable development that emanates from within and not from without”. In essence, Sankarism rests on the notion of endogenous development, and without this economic development approach aspect attached to democracy, it becomes meaningless because people do not eat elections that come once every five years.

Another different and perhaps unorthodox view on what the revolution and democracy pertain, according to Sankara (2016: 326), is that, “while the revolution means repression of the

exploiters, or our enemies, it must mean only persuasion for the masses – persuasion to take on a conscious and determined commitment”. For Sankara, conceptualisation of democracy is intertwined with that of a revolution, hence the expression and description of their revolution as being a “democratic and popular revolution”.

A practical example of how democracy and its operation instruments, elections, were conducted in Burkina Faso under Sankara’s presidency is given by Mr Lipad as follows:

Voting/electing representatives of people in CDRs was done democratically but within the means of the people. Candidates for positions in the CDRs would stand and defend their ‘manifestos’ in front of people and then the voters would make ques behind their favourite candidate. A candidate with the largest following (que) would then be the winner. Elections (western elections, where there are ballot boxes and billion Rands campaigns) are very expensive so this way of voting was not only transparent but it was also very cheap to administer. The sad part is that some African countries don’t even have money to organise these elections and they end up borrowing money from the West to fund their elections. This means that their sovereignty may be at stake because as Sankara long observed, ‘he who feeds you controls you’. Sankara’s governance was premised on looking at their means, the context.

This example presents what Mr Ben termed, the “Sankarist Alternative Program” model. We therefore need to rethink the way we administer our electoral systems in Africa because the current systems are very expensive. A case in point is the Democratic Republic of Congo which has been postponing their elections arguing that they did not have enough money to fund elections. Sankara demonstrated through how members of the CDRs were elected, that expensive elections could be avoided. In addition, there is an interesting system of voting called the marble system which was attempted with some level of success in Gambia since the 1960s, but sadly stopped in 2017 (Akwei, 2017). This system was cost effective and easier for illiterate people to use, resulting in very few spoiled votes. In short, this marble system entailed use of marked metal containers (like 20 litres paint containers) which were carefully sealed and tailor-designed to allow marbles to be caste as votes by each voter. This way, the process of voting was much faster, less cumbersome, cheap and easy to administer, and less intimidating to the rural populations who could not read and write, hence the minimum number of spoiled ‘ballots’.

Democracy Should be Subject to People's Culture and their Way of Life

During a speech marking the fourth anniversary of the revolution in Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in Burkina Faso after Ouagadougou, Sankara (2016: 321) remarked that “the democratic and popular revolution needs a convinced people, not a conquered people – a convinced people, not a submissive people passively enduring their fate”. This remark by Sankara also gives us a sense of what his perspective was on democracy and people’s role in it.

Sankara argued that political parties should be fashioned after the revolution and not for the revolution to be designed in accordance with political parties. He also argued that democracy should be modelled on the needs of people and their cultural dictates, not the other way around. Mr Lipad, responding to my question on Sankara’s vision for postcolonial Africa, which is also relevant to this sub-theme, stated that “*Sankara used to say that you can’t use someone’s system and think that you can beat them at it. You can only use their mindset, adapt it and try and find your own solution to your problem.*” This example perhaps also speaks to the notion of Western democracy, and why it has not, for the most part, worked in many parts of Africa. It would seem, in line with Sankara’s assertion cautioning against copying and pasting other people’s systems, that Africa needs to adapt certain aspects of Western democracy to its context and cultural dictates.

Responding to a question on whether Sankara’s revolutionary governance approach could work in constitutional democracies, Mr Ambassador was adamant that it would not work, insisting that,

It is not possible because democracy is lack of intelligence, democracy is encrypted, it is A, it is B, it is C. There is no pragmatism. So, Sankara’s politics could work only with a strong power, a revolutionary regime, which determines the missions to be undertaken and everyone should be involved so that these can be achieved. Democracy is not applicable in a revolutionary system unless it is a revolutionary democracy.

This response suggests that Sankara's politics and governance approach could only work in a capacitated strong state, in a revolutionary state, and in a participatory system of governance.

Justice System was Reformed such that it was Culturally Sensitive

A Eurocentric (French) judicial system continued to be practised in Upper Volta until the revolution took charge in 1983 and Sankara tried to strengthen the justice system so that it could better fight corruption in government and the private sector. Mr Lipad explains how;

Sankara went further to challenge the law system (French laws) as a whole. He inverted the principle of defence such that he made the African Burkinabe cultural dispute resolution system take prominence in the judicial system of Burkina Faso. The judicial system which is the custodian of justice dispensation needs to be changed to build our own law system so that we don't just import other people legal systems which are not conducive to our lived reality. We need to rethink and build our own judiciary system.

This was a commendable act because it meant that Sankara was re-centering and privileging the African justice systems, which had been overlooked and done away with during colonialism. This was an Afrocentric approach to dealing with conflict resolution.

Revolutionary Peoples' Tribunals were introduced to deal with corrupt government officials. In ancient times in Burkina Faso, accused people would be tried in public, with the elders of society (elected by CDRs), professionals, one magistrate, and one police officer, all acting as adjudicators and judges based on the cultural, moral, and ethical code of Burkinabe society (Harsch, 2014). In the same vein, Sankara re-introduced this practice so that people who were found guilty could be tried in public. Mr Ben also reiterates this point:

There was also the Tribunal Populaire de la Revolution, TPR [People's Tribunal of the Revolution], which was an instrument for the trial of corrupt people, but it also aimed at warning those guilty of embezzling public funds they could be handcuffed, irrespective of their social status. At the time, he set an example with the general secretary of the ECOWAS, Musa Bock. During a summit held in Bamako, Sankara brought him in chains to Ouagadougou for his trial. The whole world screamed, "Scandal! Scandal! This has never been seen". He was accused of embezzling people's money of the ECOWAS. Musa Bock was the boss and Thomas Sankara brought him here, for he said he was to be tried in front of the TPR for stealing the money of several countries. These are strong examples in terms of governance."

Harsch (2014: 61) notes that, “the TPRs’ purpose was both repressive and educational, to punish crimes of corruption and embezzlement, and instil a greater sense of morality in public life”. Thomas Sankara, speaking at the inauguration of the TPR on 3 January 1984, said,

...the creation of the People’s Revolutionary Courts is justified by the fact that, in place of the traditional courts, from now on the Voltaic people intend to put into practice the principle of real participation by the toiling and exploited classes in the administration and management of state affairs in all spheres and in all sectors of society. (Sankara, 2016: 80-90).

Sankara further explained that the judges were chosen from amongst workers by workers themselves and they did not have to know the old laws (of the ‘traditional’ Eurocentric courts), since they would be guided by their ancient cultural moral compass for popular justice (ibid).

Mr Fay, corroborating what Mr Lipad said about Sankara’s government subverting of the traditional and colonial justice system in order to be culturally responsive, opined that,

In respect of the justice system, he reverted back to the African ways of dealing with justice and dispute management. It was old people in the villages who were nominated to preside over cases and resolve disputes in a culturally sensitive and nuanced manner. The other thing is that after he took power, he reached out to the older previous Presidents of Burkina to come and help rebuild and development their country, based on their previous experience. In other countries, such people would have been executed, especially if power was taken through the military (coup).

The last part of this statement by Mr Fay further reinforces the argument that what happened in Burkina Faso on 4 August 1983 during seizure of power by Blaise Compaore and about 200 soldiers joined by Burkinabe civilians was not a classical coup, as some argue. It was, in fact, a revolution, albeit a ‘bloodless’ and relatively smooth transition/takeover of power.

Institutional Reforms: CDRs, National Council of the Revolution, etc

A myriad of reforms was introduced, including the creation of new institutions intended to be the building blocks that would sustain the revolution. The following institutions and structures of the revolution, amongst many others, were overseen by the movement spearheading the revolution: the National Council of the Revolution (NCR): Committees for the Defence of the

Revolution (CDRs), the National Movement of Pioneers (NMP), the National Union of Elders of Burkina (NUEB), the National Union of Peasants of Burkina (NUPB), the Ministry of Women's Position in Society (MWPS), the Women's Union of Burkina (WUB), the Revolutionary Peoples' Tribunals (RPT), etc.

The two most important institutions, which were the backbone of the revolution, and whose impact and contribution in the revolution will be explained, are the NCR and CDRs. The National Council of the Revolution was a body formed by the leftist Voltaic armed forces two months before the revolution of August 1983. According to Sankara, its basic purpose and objective was "to defend the interests of Voltaic people and to achieve their deep aspirations for liberty, for *genuine independence*, and for economic and social progress" (Sankara, 2016: 39). He further explained that,

The revolution's object[ive] is to give the people power. That is why the very first act of the revolution, after the 4 August Proclamation, was to call on the people to form Revolutionary Defence Committees (CDRs). The National Revolutionary Council (CNR) believes that for this to be truly a people's revolution, it must destroy the neo-colonial state machinery and organise a new machine which guarantees the people's sovereignty.

Notwithstanding the criticism levelled against the CDRs by respondents during my fieldwork and in most of the literature, the key functions of the CDRs are detailed as follows: 'The CDRs constitute the institutional expression of the people's sovereignty and revolutionary power. More specifically, the CDRs have three main functions: (1) a political function of developing the masses' consciousness through education, training and mobilization; (2) a socio-cultural and economic function, i.e. to organize collective public works at the local level; and (3) a military function, namely the defence of the revolution against potential internal and external enemies' (Martin, 1987: 80). Mr Theo also noted that CDRs, although formed with good intentions, were ultimately beginning to taint the name and legitimacy of the revolution and the NCR. He said "*I'm not saying that everything was perfect and some would say that the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR) were abusing their power. A few months before his assassination, Sankara realised that some of the CDR members were abusing the revolution, so he was in the process of reforming the CDR and addressing that problem.*"

Theme 10: Debt and Foreign Aid are the Handmaiden of Colonisers

As a Pan Africanist who, I would argue, drew a lot of inspiration and lessons from one of the greatest Pan Africanists of the 20th century, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Thomas Sankara understood that what is to be done for Africans must be done by Africans themselves with their own resources. This is because a nation never gets the respect from international community of nations if it cannot do things for itself, and it will always be beholden to those that give it handouts in whatever shape or form. The Sankara government, however weary it was about foreign aid specifically, was not myopic because it knew that there was some well-intentioned aid, which genuinely sought to provide assistance, therefore its aid policy did not prohibit all aid in a blanket approach. It was just selective about the type of and conditions attached to the aid the country was offered because its guiding principle was that it did not want the country to be in perpetual need of aid. This theme (10) therefore gives findings on Burkina's government approach and attitude to debt and foreign aid.

Operating Within their Means: Fiscal Discipline and Self-imposed Austerity

When asked by Jean-Philippe Rapp, in 1985, what Burkina Faso would do without foreign aid and SAPs loans, Sankara first told him about the state of Burkina Faso's financial affairs when he took over government in an attempt to give him context as to the financial situation of the country. He stated that,

In 1983 when we came to power, the state coffers were empty. The regime we overturned had negotiated and obtained a structural adjustment loan from France of 3 billion CFA francs. And with a certain amount of pushing and pulling, this loan was re-assigned to our government. That wasn't an easy task and I can assure you that since then, no one has lent us anything at all, not France nor any other country. We receive no financial aid' (Sankara, 2016: 165).

When pressed about how his government would avoid a budget deficit in such a financial climate, he responded that "we fill the hole by preventing it from appearing – that is, we don't allow a deficit" (ibid). This conversation between Sankara and Rapp is a clear indication that the Burkinabe government was adamant about reconstructing and developing the country with or without anyone's help and it was hellbent on proving to itself and Burkinabe people that it could do it and that would help to salvage the dignity and independence of the country.

During a students' debate that I attended at Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo University, Ouagadougou, where students were debating a controversial statement that had recently been made by the (then) Benin President Patrice Talon, who claimed that CFA franc was doing well for Franc Zone countries (of which Burkina is part), one student who took to the podium argued that,

We are requested to come and deposit money [in France's central bank] and when time comes to taking it back, we are not allowed. So, when we need money, we have to find a way to obtain a loan as they use our money for their own ends. I am talking about the principle of fixed parity between Franc CFA and Euro. This is my take: as long as we are not independent economically, we will never ever develop ourselves. No country can develop itself without genuine monetary independence and all the economists will tell you that.

This bizarre and parasitic currency relationship between France and its former colonies mostly in West Africa is a clear sign of a master-slave relationship that persists to date because the umbilical cord that binds these countries with France was never truly cut (to borrow Walter Rodney's (1973) words) during their political independence in the 1960s.

Responding to a question on whether Sankara's revolutionary governance approach could work in current electoral democratic states in Africa, Mr Fay gave a detailed, insightful and comprehensive answer, possibly owing to his expertise on Burkinabe and African political economy, when he noted that:

Sankara's governance approach was premised on giving people power to do things for themselves with a bit of help and guidance from the state. I don't know if his governance style would work in modern day 'democratic' states. Sankara could also be labelled by many as a fiscally conservative President because of the self-induced austerity measures he took in order to finance endogenous development that would not be at the mercy of foreign capital and investments. He believed that the state could not spend what it did not have. In a true democracy, where people understand that power lies in them, it would work, but in 'banana' republics in Africa, it would not. He was way beyond his time and that of many leaders in the 1980s. Only when the wheels of democracy began to be entrenched in Africa were people beginning to talk about him and his efforts, especially around his views on loans and maintaining fiscal discipline.

Sankara was indeed fiscally conservative and this finds expression and justification in the wide range of far-reaching austerity measures he took to finance the country's endogenous development. He could have easily been an economist had he studied further, because he wanted to account for every cent spent by his government and save and invest in rebuilding Burkina as much as possible. Speaking directly to this notion of how fiscally conservative and disciplined Sankara and his government were, Sankara (2016: 166) explained that 'by lowering salaries, by adopting more modest lifestyles, but also through better management of the funds we have, and by preventing their misappropriation, we've been able to generate some surplus that allows for modest investment... This will tell you how carefully we watch our pennies.'

Burkina Faso under Sankara operated within its meagre means and Sankara's discipline was not only fiscal; it was also moral and based on principle of equality for all. Mr Tom illustrates this well in recounting an incident between Sankara and his sister when there was no water in her neighbourhood:

I think for his governance, he put the country's interests, Africa's interests above all, including his friends and family...His family was forgotten, and several leaders hardly understand that. Let me provide you with an anecdote: he once went to visit his sister in neighbourhood at around eleven o'clock at night and in that neighbourhood, there was no water. So, being the president, he entered his sister's courtyard riding his bike, and there was nobody. Her husband was not in and herself was not in as well. He waited until half past eleven as the door finally opened. He witnessed his sister entering with a bucket of water on her head and inquired what was happening. She replied, "Do not you know? There is no water in our neighbourhood?" We must rise at eleven o'clock to go and look for water. The following day, Sankara managed to bring water into the neighbourhood and brought two water towers the following week but not close to his sister's place. She still had to walk far to look for water but at least there was water in the neighbourhood. People had to go in another neighbourhood, for that area was yet to be divided into plots and it was not possible to legally supply that area with. That is why Sankara's sister still had to walk five hundred meters, one kilometre away to look for water. Other presidents would have brought water straight to their sister's place just because they lived in that neighbourhood. Until now, those two water towers are still there, and nothing has changed. And that was Sankara. Many people ignore these details of him who put everything for the sake of people. The people first and the rest follows."

One of Sankara's close family members/relatives also attested to how strict Sankara was when it came to using state resources and privilege to benefit his friends or family. He did not want to be seen to be abusing his powers and wasting state resources. She said *“personally, I went to his [Blaise Compaore] place to take money for school supplies during back-to-school time. He was single and was staying with François near the National Assembly. So, when you find yourself betrayed this way, every human can guess how it feels...It was easier for us to access Blaise confidentially, for Thomas was rigorous and did not grant any privilege on the ground that we were the president's [relatives]. So, it was better to go through Blaise. Just to let you know about these relationships so that you can imagine in which sort of situation people found themselves”*.

This finding points to the fact that Sankara put Burkina Faso and Burkinabe before his family and friends. Even some of his family members despised him for not 'helping' them by changing their lives when he became president, by prioritising them over the general public. However, Blaise was easier to negotiate favours from, unlike Sankara. Sankara did not give his family and relatives any better treatment or privileges merely because he was in power. So, they approached Blaise if they needed something, because they knew Sankara would scrutinise them and refuse to concede to their demands. What does this say about the character of Blaise? Perhaps it suggests that he was not principled enough. He was expedient, and was involved in the revolution to abuse power.

Debt Free Africa: 'Debt as a Cleverly Organised Reconquest of Africa'

In an effort to avoid indebtedness to other countries and international institutions like the World Bank, Sankara's government undertook huge budgetary cuts and restructuring since it took power in 1983 up until 1985, when Sankara made these remarks about the country's budget trajectory: 'In the first quarter of 1983, the budget – in which we had already been direct and implement the budget ourselves. The first quarter of 1984, we no longer had a deficit but instead involved as CSP⁴⁹ members, but did not have final say – showed a deficit of 695 million CFA francs. By the first quarter of 1984, we had reduced this to 1 million CFA francs, since we were able to achieve a surplus of 1.0985 billion CFA francs, and this is how it will continue' (Sankara, 2016: 167). Detailing how these budgetary cuts were made, enabling the government

⁴⁹ Council of Popular Salvation. This was a mainly military movement that was in power at the time, presided over by Commander Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo, before Sankara became President of Burkina Faso.

to achieve a budget surplus in less than two years, Sankara (ibid) explained some of the nitty-gritties, saying that, “we’ve tightened up in all areas. You’re not allowed to write on only one side of a sheet of paper here. Our ministers travel economy-class and have an expense allowance of only 15,000 CFA francs per day. This is the same for me, except that as Head of State I have the advantage of being provided for when I’m received abroad.”

It is important to note that the 15,000 CFA francs allowance mentioned here is approximately equivalent to 366 Rands in today’s time-value of money (calculated on 22 May 2019 when 1 ZAR [Rand] = 40.918 XOF [CFA francs]). By all accounts and estimations, even then, this allowance was very small, even for a person who is not in such a position of power. This therefore bears testimony, once again, to how serious the government was about saving costs as the country was not receiving external financial assistance through loans or foreign aid that it used to receive during the neo-colonial puppet governments in power since the country’s independence in 1960. As an example of the limited allowance given to ministers, Sankara spoke about one minister who had attended a conference in Geneva and could not afford to find a room there and resorted to sleeping in nearby France with his colleague, sharing a modest hotel room (ibid). These are some of the unfathomable sacrifices that government officials had to make for the greater good of the Burkinabe people, enabling the government to have achieved so much (with all imperial forces against them) in a brief period of just four years.

On the question of debt itself, Sankara famously lobbied African states at the OAU summit in July 1987 to form and present a united front against paying colonial debt. As he argued, ‘as far as we are concerned, we say very clearly: the foreign debt should not be repaid. It’s unjust. It’s like paying war reparations twice over’ (ibid: 170). He further warned the Heads of State present at that summit that if they did not categorically renounce and refuse to pay debt as a unit, they would be individually killed. Unfortunately, he was killed in the literal sense just a few (three) months after this speech. When he said they would be killed, he did not just mean physically being murdered, but also that the colonial hegemons who were owed money and most of their Euro-American allies would introduce economic sanctions and all other diplomatic instruments to suffocate their economies, thereby ‘killing’ their developmental aspirations.

Aid Should Help Us Overcome More Aid

Most foreign aid (be it financial aid, food aid, skills or humanitarian aid), much like loans, comes with some of conditions attached to it, which is at times explicitly stringent, and at other times more veiled and subtler. This aid can therefore be used against the same people which it purports to help, because it serves as a political instrument to achieve certain outcomes such as concessions for favourable business deals for companies from the donor country, amongst other things. Sankara was therefore very weary of this type of aid. When Jean-Philippe Rapp asked Sankara about the conditions under which his government accepts or would accept foreign aid, Sankara replied that, “

We do so when the aid offered respects our independence and dignity. We reject aid that buys off consciences and that provides benefits only for the leaders. If you offer us aid to facilitate our purchase of your products, or to enable certain of us to open up bank accounts in your country, we'll turn it down (ibid: 176).

One of the ways of helping Africa avoid and overcome the need for aid and loans is if Africa creates an internal market by drastically increasing intra-Africa trade and this be achieved if we ‘produce in Africa, transform in Africa, consume in Africa. Produce what we need and consume what we produce, in place of importing it’ (Sankara, 2016: 308). These were the words of Sankara speaking to African Heads of State in Addis Ababa in 1987, pleading with them work together more closely and forge a formidable Pan African force so as to renew Africa. Being the action-oriented person that he was, who believed in leading by example, he joyfully and proudly told them that “Burkina Faso has come to show you the cotton produced in Burkina Faso, woven in Burkina Faso, sewn in Burkina Faso to clothe the Burkinabe`.” He continued, “my delegation and I were clothed by our weavers, our peasants. *Not a single thread* comes from Europe or America. [applause] I’m not here to put on a fashion show. I simply want to say that we should undertake to live as Africans. It is the only way to live free and to live in dignity” (ibid: 308-309). Again, these words are indicative of the fact that Sankara was not a just a theoretical adherent of Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity, he breathed and practised them to the latter, inviting his peers throughout Africa to join hands with him to be proudly African leaders, not European leaders in black skins.

Mr Fidelity also weighed in on the issue of aid, mostly from the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), indicating that, “*when you expect aid, those who are bringing it are coming with a certain mindset and it in this sense that Sankara said that NGOs [could] help*

us, but not so much in terms of what we want. He believed that aid should help us to overcome aid and then emphasis was put on the rural world.”

Implications for Africa’s Development: Sankara’s Legacy Footprint

Sankara once said a million Sankaras will be born even after he dies. Could President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and President John Magufuli of Tanzania be some of this new breed of Sankaras that he ‘prophesised’ about? The jury is still out on this question. In addition, we may never know if these two leaders may have closely studied the Burkina Faso case under Sankara and borrowed some of his ideas and philosophies for their respective countries. Mr Theo seems to think that Magufuli may have learned a few things from Sankara: *“If you go to Tanzania today, the current President (John Magufuli) is doing great things there. Even some people are calling him the new Sankara.”* The use of the military in developmental projects intended to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people in Tanzania, for example, is reminiscent of how Sankara would encourage the military to join hands with the people in building Burkina Faso.

President John Magufuli has made quite an impression on many in Tanzania, Kenya, even in South Africa owing to the sweeping changes and self-imposed austerity measures he introduced in Tanzania since assuming office in October 2015. Much like Sankara, he did not waste time in clamping down corrupt officials in the public and private sector alike. There are a number of articles that attempt to draw comparisons between Sankara and Magufuli and one of them in Kataka Magazine is entitled ‘*President John Pombe Magufuli of Tanzania and the Resurrection of Thomas Sankara*’. Another article by Nairobi Business Monthly reads ‘*Go, Magufuli, go and fulfil Thomas Sankara’s dream for Africa*’.

The Institute for Security Studies - ISS (2015) reports that, “one of his [Magufuli] first acts were to cancel the celebration of Independence Day on 9 December, diverting the budget to street cleaning as part of a new National Day of Cleanliness. Pictures of him participating in that event, collecting rubbish, and then riding back to his office on a bicycle, were transmitted across the region and beyond.” These cleaning campaigns and cost-cutting measures such as going to work riding on a bicycle are reminiscent of what Sankara did in Burkina Faso over thirty years ago in West Africa, acts which are now resurfacing in East Africa. The ISS (2015) further reports that,

[a]fter visiting Dar es Salaam's Muhimbili Hospital and seeing the deplorable state it was in – with patients sleeping on the floor or sharing beds – he diverted 200 million shillings budgeted for 'parliamentary parties' to buy 300 hospital beds. He also replaced the governing board and cut the spending on his inauguration from US\$100 000 to US\$7 000 and gave the difference to the hospital.

These austerity measures that channelled funds that may have been otherwise wasted to where they are needed the most, exactly mirrors what was done during the presidency of Thomas Sankara and it is heart-warming to see some of these initiatives practised in other countries. These are some pertinent practical developmental lessons that many other African countries could learn from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara and more recently from Tanzania's John Magufuli.

With regards to Rwanda, suffice to say that there is not much literature that seeks to compare and contrast Sankara with Paul Kagame in terms of their individual leadership styles. However, when one looks at Rwanda's development policies and their aid policies, there are striking similarities to some of Sankara's policies. For instance, the Afrocentric Governance and Homegrown Initiatives (GHI) policy which states that "as part of efforts to reconstruct Rwanda and nurture a shared national identity, the Government of Rwanda drew on aspects of Rwandan culture and traditional practices to enrich and adapt its development programs to the country's needs and context" (Republic of Rwanda, 2017). This initiative has a strong resemblance to the environmental policy in Burkina of Tree Planting during all ceremonies, which was taken from the traditional Burkinabe culture. The Rwandan Aid Policy (2011), amongst others, adopts the principled position that "The GoR⁵⁰ will refuse aid where the costs of accepting it are too high, if the aid is not sufficiently aligned to GoR priorities, or if there are excessive conditions tied to receiving the aid." Again, this is somewhat similar to the Burkina Faso's position on aid under the Sankara presidency, namely that the government would only accept aid that sought to help the country to end its need for more aid.

Mr Dami, reflecting on the legacy of Sankara and which aspects of his governance and programmes contemporary African leaders could emulate or avoid, disclosed that, "*we have contacted Kagame who said, 'but what are you looking for, you have Burkina' and all the ideas he is implementing today in Rwanda were taken from Burkina. He relied on Sankara's ideas to design his programmes. He obtained the Orientation Speech Policy and he readjusted [it]*

⁵⁰ The Government of Rwanda.

for Rwanda.” It would seem that, if indeed Kagame uttered these words, Sankara’s spirit and philosophies continue to inspire more African leaders.

The relationship between Thomas Sankara’s Burkina Faso and Jerry Rawlings’ Ghana was very strong, owing to the close friendship between these two leaders, but more so because they shared, by and large, the same ideological inclinations which had socialist/communist leanings. Burkina Faso and Ghana’s relationship was not only political and diplomatic, as it went far deeper than that, to the extent that the armed forces of these two countries would frequently have joined military manoeuvres and share security expertise. The relationship was even far reaching since, at the time when the Nkrumah’s dream of United States of Africa seemed to be fading, the two leaders were in serious talks about prospects of the unification of their respective countries, notwithstanding their different colonial histories under France and Great Britain respectively. They saw beyond these superficial and mental divisions that continue to plague Africa and keep Africans divided. A solid foundation for their relationship, it is arguable, might have been Kwame Nkrumah, who was adamant that the political freedom of Ghana meant nothing when other African countries were still under the yoke of colonialism and Apartheid.

Rothchild and Gyimah-Boadi (1989: 221), in their comparative paper on Ghana and Burkina Faso entitled, “Populism in Ghana and Burkina Faso”, contend that, “in their search for authentic African development path, these regimes displayed many similar characteristics. First, they were committed in principle, and to some extent, in practice, to eliminating class privileges and achieving the political and social equality of all individuals and groups.” Mr Minister, speaking on the Sankara’s post-colonial Africa vision, opined that,

One can simply say that President Sankara was after Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba, the holder of a new vision for an Africa with an awakened youth and who could count on themselves to build the whole of Africa. This explains why there were so many attempts to isolate him, but in the name of Pan Africanism, he leaned on Ghana, with Jerry Rawlings. If the harnessing of both had worked, they would succeed in establishing a hardcore [powerful state].

Perhaps this would have been the nucleus for a black power Pan Africanist state, as advocated by Chinweizu (2006).

Another student from the FDG, which is composed of senior postgraduate students at Ouagadougou University, made some comparative analysis between Sankara-Rawlings leadership styles, arguing that,

Thomas Sankara's only mistake was the tension between him and the traditional leaders, for he heavily believed in Marxism ideology. For him, everyone must work, and I recall a time when he disconnected their electricity because they failed to pay the bill. Before he rose to power, traditional leaders were not paying electricity and all this changed when Thomas Sankara came. That was an important mistake compared to what happened with Jerry Rawlings in Ghana. When Rawlings became the president, he went toward the traditional leaders for blessing purposes. That is what explained the fact that the revolution in Ghana was a complete success.

To Sankara, everyone was equal before the revolution, and perhaps, as suggested here, he was a bit too heavy-handed when it came to traditional leaders and other classes that had enjoyed certain privileges during colonial and neo-colonial regimes.

As recently as 2nd March 2019, during the unveiling of Sankara's 5-metre high statue in Ouagadougou, where Sankara and twelve of his colleagues were brutally murdered on that fateful day of 15 October 1987, President JJ Rawlings was present and made some heart-warming remarks about his friend and confidante. At this unveiling, Rawlings is reported to have said "we have emotions on this site but we need to capitalize on these emotions to move forward. Those who fell here remind us that we are fighting for freedom and justice" (Mbamalu, 2019). See annexure K for the image of this statue, with President Rawlings and President Kabore next to it. Had the amalgamation of Burkina Faso and Ghana taken place under these two leaders, perhaps that would have laid an important foundation not only towards regional integration, but also been a learning experience and stepping stone towards the complete unification of Africa, under one government. Sankara and Rawlings saw the importance of political and cultural integration in Africa, in the same way that economic integration is important and at times overstated through Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

INTERPRETATION OF MIXED METHODS RESULTS

This section discusses how quantitative results and qualitative findings were integrated and what process were followed to make the integration (or mixing) of findings possible. Mixed

methods convergent research design is applied through the merging of qualitative themes together with quantitative constructs. The last subsection in this section discusses the ‘fit’ of data from findings of the two approaches.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

According to Woolley (2009: 7), “quantitative and qualitative components can be considered ‘integrated’ to the extent that these components are explicitly related to each other within a single study and in such a way as to be mutually illuminating, thereby producing findings that are greater than the sum of parts”. In essence, the significance of integrating findings from both approaches is because the idea is that more enriched findings will emerge that would be more meaningful compared to findings that would have emerged from just one approach.

The notion of “fit” of data integration of qualitative and quantitative data is very important to test during the actual integration process. This refers to the extent of “coherence of qualitative and quantitative findings” and this assessment of fit of integration results in three possibilities: confirmation, expansion, and discordance (Guetterman, 2017: 197; Fetters, 2013). It is useful to fully understand under which conditions one or both of these possible outcomes occurs/would occur during the integration of findings. Fetters (2013: 2143-2144) explains that,

...confirmation occurs when the findings from both types of data confirm the results of the other. As the two data sources provide similar conclusions, the results have greater credibility. Expansion occurs when the findings from the two sources of data diverge and expand insights of the phenomenon of interest by addressing different aspects of a single phenomenon or by describing complementary aspects of a central phenomenon of interest [...] Discordance occurs if the qualitative and quantitative findings are inconsistent, incongruous, contradict, conflict, or disagree with each other.

The merging of qualitative and quantitative data can be done in one of three ways: by 1) comparing results side-by-side, 2) transforming data, and 3) constructing joint displays (Guetterman, 2017). Integration through merging is done by comparing findings of the qualitative research process with those of the quantitative process so that similarities and differences can easily be noted and contextualised. Integration ‘through data transformation occurs in two steps. First, one type of data must be converted into the other type of data (i.e., qualitative into quantitative or quantitative into qualitative). Second, the transformed data are then integrated with the data that have not been transformed’ (Fetters, Curry, and Creswell,

2013: 2142). The third method of merging qualitative and quantitative data seeks to ‘integrate the data by bringing the data together through a visual means to draw out new insights beyond the information gained from the separate quantitative and qualitative results’ (ibid: 2134–2156). This approach is useful in that it helps the researcher summate findings and package them in easy to read tables, figures, graphs, or matrix.

Table 6.14: Mixed Methods Convergent Research Design

Integration of results (Merging of QUAL themes + Quan constructs)

QUALitative Themes		Quantitative Constructs
Democratic and popular revolution		Revolution/ary
Endogenous development strategy		Coup de'tat/military
Recourse to force as one of his strategies		Freedom/independence
Merging theory with practice		Democratic and popular revolution
Sankara was ahead of his time		Proletariats/peasants
Afrocentric leadership		Women emancipation
Sankara as an anti-thesis to many leaders of today		Participatory governance
Basis of Sankara's thinking: produce what you consume		Discipline/Principle/d
All sectors of the state must be revolutionised		Pragmatism
Debt and foreign aid are the handmaiden of colonisers		Implementation

Source: Author

Discussion of the “Fit” of Data in Table 6.14

Before discussing the fit of data (coherence of findings from both approaches) and implications of the integrated findings, it is important to explain briefly how integration table 6.14 was arrived at and populated. All the 10 qualitative themes are taken as they are from the qualitative findings section, table 6.13, and populated in this table. However, for the quantitative constructs column, a different approach was used in selecting which constructs would be used when integrating results through merging. This is because there were too many quantitative constructs (28 constructs in total, from four categories outlined in the methodology section). Therefore, a strategy that was used to trim them down to 10 such that they match the number of qualitative themes was as follows: Only two categories were considered, which is those with the highest percentage frequency distribution as outlined in the first section of this chapter that reports quantitative results.

These categories are the ones with the two tables, 6.10 (Revolution category) and 6.11 (Sankarism category) which give a table format, easy to track the comparison of the top two categories, which gained the most hits in the sampled speeches and literature. As seen in these two tables, there are 14 constructs, seven from each table, so I reduced them to 10 by excluding the two constructs from each table that had the least percentage frequency distribution. The excluded constructs are “decolonise” and “authoritarian”, from the revolution category and “self-negation” and “incorruptible” from the Sankarism category.

Of the total 20 qualitative and quantitative themes and constructs, the above integration process through merging has resulted in 13 mixed methods convergent results that *confirm* each other. 8 mixed methods convergent results *expand* our knowledge from the two approaches. Lastly, there are 4 mixed methods convergent results that *contradict* each other from the two approaches. This merging process sought to link qualitative themes with quantitative constructs so as to gain a better understanding about what the connections are, if any, between qualitative findings (themes) and quantitative results (constructs).

The 13 results that confirm each other were arrived at by counting the number of the two-headed arrows that appear on both sides in the integration table 6.14, that is, an arrow is counted as one from one side (themes side) to the other (constructs side). The 8 results that expand our knowledge on Sankara’s leadership and governance tactics were arrived at by counting the number of the two-headed arrows that appear more than once on each side of the table, then

adding the number. Put differently, there were four themes that had constructs comparable to them more than once and there were also four constructs that had themes comparable to them more than once, making it 8 comparable expansion results. Lastly, of the 20 themes and constructs compared during integration, only 4 were contradicting, three from the themes and only one from the constructs. The four contradicting results simply refer to the themes and constructs that do not have any arrows pointing to them, implying that there is no comparable relationship at all.

The eight themes and constructs that expanded our knowledge of the research problem and research questions are:

1. Democratic and popular revolution (from themes)
2. Merging theory with practice
3. Sankara as an anti-thesis to many leaders of today
4. All sectors of the state must be revolutionised
5. Revolution/ary
6. Democratic and popular revolution (from constructs)
7. Participatory governance
8. Implementation

The 13 out of 20 confirming results mean that 65% of the integrated data merely confirms what we already had a sense of and this therefore gives results of this study greater credibility, according to Fetters (2013). Likewise, the 8 out of 20 expanding results imply that 40% of the integrated data ‘expand insights of the phenomenon of interest by addressing different aspects of a single phenomenon or by describing complementary aspects of a central phenomenon of interest’, according to Fetters (2013: 2143). These are the most important results that justify why it was important for this study to deploy a mixed methods research approach. These eight integrated results (themes and constructs) shows which aspects of Sankara’s revolutionary governance in Burkina Faso were the most important to them achieving the things they did in such a short period of time. Lastly, the 4 out of 20 contradicting results mean that 20% of the integrated data from the two mixed research approaches were ‘inconsistent, incongruous, contradict, conflict, or disagree with each other’, as defined by Fetters (2013: 2144)

It is important to bear in mind that the process of identifying constructs as explained in the methodology chapter and reported in the quantitative results section of this chapter, was a

quantitative process. This is because it involved counting how many times certain words/phrases/constructs were used in relation to others by Sankara in his speeches and interviews and how many times those same words were used by scholars in the literature. Furthermore, the descriptive statistical analysis and reporting of these constructs in numbers also indicates the quantitative approach aspect of this study.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter gives a concise summation of the thesis in its entirety and also ventures to distil from the findings, implications for Africa's development and tentative recommendations thereof. Conclusions are made in line with the primary research question and the overall objective of the study. To reiterate, the main research question was: What leadership traits and governance strategies could Africans learn from Sankara's revolutionary government to advance African unity and renaissance? The crux of the research objectives was to distil lessons for socio-economic development from the Sankara administration of 1983-1987 by exploring the 'radical' governance philosophies of Thomas Sankara and his Pan African ideals. This chapter is sub-divided into four main sections. The first one reflects on all the preceding chapters and what they sought to achieve. The second section delves deeper into analysing the key findings and results of the study, juxtaposing the findings against the set objectives of the study. The third section discusses and reflects on wider implications of the key findings in relation to the research problem and question of the study. Lastly, section four proposes feasible recommendations and lessons that contemporary African leaders charged with development efforts of their various constituencies can consider.

A: Preceding Chapters Reflections

Chapter One, which is the Introduction, set the tone, structure, and justifications why this research was necessary. This introductory chapter gave an elaborate background of the study, research problem, research questions and objectives, the scope of the study and its limitations, significance of the study, and lastly, mapped the overall outline of the study. In essence, Chapter One was structured in such a way that it acts as the compass and the tour guide of the reader about the contents of the study. In short, the motivation for this study was the ousting of Blaise Compaore, the former President of Burkina Faso, in 2014, after his twenty-seven-years rule. This youth-led mass removal of Compaore from office brought to the fore the legacy of Thomas Sankara, which, until then, was suppressed and censored. Sankara ruled Burkina Faso for only four years (1983-1987) before his brutal assassination in 1987.

Linked to this, Mutunhu (2011: 69) succinctly observed that “efforts by Africa to resist the interference of the North often trigger economic sanctions, example, the smart sanctions in Zimbabwe or the elimination of powerful leaders like Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah”. It is against this background that philosophies and lessons from such leaders should be excavated and explored with the aim of using them to further African Renaissance, Pan Africanism and ultimately for a United States of Africa dream to be realised, as espoused by Kwame Nkrumah and other Pan African nationalists who came before and after him. Lastly, the chapter explained why the study was important to pursue. I felt it is important that we should begin cherishing and learning more about our leaders as Africans, who left a legacy of self-sacrifice, diligent and disciplined leadership in service of Africans and humanity as a whole. It is for this reason that Sankara’s leadership is important to be studied in a detailed and systematic way so that efforts could be cogently made to emulate and nurture a million Sankaras.

Chapter Two is an overview, assessment and reflection on some of the most notable and concrete developmental interventions that Sankara’s NCR government introduced and implement in the four years of its lifespan. These projects and interventions formed the crux of what today is known as the radical audacious August Revolution because in the space of just four years, the material lived conditions of scores of people changed for the better, as their basic needs were met, such as two meals a day and clean drinking water. The chapter is subdivided into four sections marking the four years of the revolution. These periods were characterised by different developmental programmes and different challenges until the last period (1986-1987) where the revolution was faced with a lot of internal and external contradictions, leading to the untimely assassination of Thomas Sankara in October 1987.

Chapter Three was a straight forward yet complicated chapter to compile because of the challenges alluded to under ‘Limitations of Study’ section in Chapter One. In recent years, especially since 2014, there has been an increased interest in Thomas Sankara’s leadership and his August Revolution, especially from the non-French speaking countries in Africa and the world at large. Prior to this, most of the literature was written in French and many documentaries were also conducted in the same language, making it difficult for people who are not proficient in the French language to fully access information about the Burkina Faso history and revolution of 1983. Therefore, this language barrier made my review and analysis

of the texts rather difficult as I cannot read or write French. In part, I overcame this challenge by asking my sworn translator to compile brief abstracts of what certain literature that was in French and of interest to me was about so that could gauge its significance and relevance for the study. Also, videos and documentaries that I deemed important were strategically browsed and summated together with the translator.

The chapter attempted to do an extensive screening and analysis of the main ideas and contentions about Thomas Sankara's leadership as a former military man, his unorthodox governance strategies, etc. This helped me to, after filtering most of the relevant works written about this subject matter, identify a research gap and then accordingly structure my own research angle/niche. The research gap that was identified was that in as much as there is some substantial research done on the Burkina Faso Revolution, not much has been done to systematically and comprehensively situate Sankara's ideas and politics in the realm of thought leadership, African Renaissance, Afrocentricity and in attempting to use his revolutionary project of development in Burkina Faso, as a guiding framework for development in contemporary Africa.

Chapter Four presents the theoretical framework of the study. It is important as it situates and grounds the study so that it has the requisite academic rigour in data collection and analysis process. This chapter, therefore outlined and explained three contending theoretical frameworks that the author considered as the most relevant in guiding the research process. Out of the three, two theoretical frameworks were adopted and a justification was given about why those two were the most appropriate theories. These theories are; Pan Africanism, Dependency Theory, and Afrocentricity. Figure 1 was designed to allow for an easy to understand depiction of how the theories were selected and used so as to draw developmental lesson for Africa's renewal, from the Burkina experience under Sankara's leadership. The two theories which were ultimately selected and used in giving the study a sound theoretical grounding are Pan Africanism and Afrocentricity. Pioneers and leading people who propounded these theories were discussed and the historical review of how these theories were conceived and evolved over time were also explained. The last section in the theoretical framework chapter justifies why these two theories were used together, instead of using just one theory.

What makes Pan Africanism an appropriate fit for this study is the ties that Sankara initiated in Harlem, New York in 1984. He gave a profound speech at the Harriet Tubman School where

he said that “any African head of state who comes to New York must first pass through Harlem. This is why we consider that our White House is in Black Harlem” (Sankara, 1984: 122). The application of Afrocentricity in the analysis of ‘the Sankara phenomenon’ and the Burkina revolution ensures that all pertinent issues that have a bearing on subject matter of the study are tackled without restraint. In addition, this theory is capable of answering the where and how questions to African development challenges as it pertains not only to the political, economic and social aspects, but also to the cultural, philosophical, epistemological and, broadly, the intellectual bondage of Africans.

Chapter Five deals with the research methods and methodologies deployed. It describes how the research study was undertaken and what tools were employed in data collection and who the target participants were, how they were sourced and where they were interviewed. The study used a mixed method research approach which, in short, is a combination of the widely known and orthodox qualitative and quantitative research approaches. This chapter is very important because it gives the reader a detailed step-by-step description and narration of the how, why, where, when, and who of the entire research process from conception to reporting of findings. A case for why mixed methods research approach was opted for is made. It was used because it emphasises the importance of not only using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in gathering, analysing data and reporting findings, but it also stresses the importance of the integration of data such that the sum result offers more details, and results are more trustworthy than when just one research approach was used.

Chapter Six presents the findings and results of this research. Below is a detailed summary of this chapter;

B: Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions

Findings of the study in this section are presented in their totality, not in terms of whether such findings are from the quantitative or qualitative analytic process. Only findings that stood out are summarised and reiterated. This is done by relating the findings with the key objectives and questions of the study in an attempt to make a determination of whether the study achieved what it set out to do.

Primary Research Question:

What leadership traits and governance strategies could Africans learn from Sankara’s revolutionary government to advance African unity and renaissance?

Main Findings Relating to the Research Question:

All four of the following themes positively and significantly attempted answering the key question of the study.

Endogenous development strategy: It emerged from the findings that the concept of self-centred development played a crucial role in ensuring that Burkina Faso transformed from an ailing fiscus with a large budget deficit in 1983, to having a significant budget surplus by 1985. Sankara understood that for Burkina Faso to be politically independent, it also had to be economically independent, otherwise their political independence would be futile and merely symbolic. That is why in his efforts of enforcing austerity measures, Sankara went to the extent of reducing lodging and flying expenses of his government officials, including removing of their bonuses etc. Monies that were saved from all these interventions were therefore channelled towards building of infrastructure which turned Burkina Faso into a construction site. In addition, a lot of the resources were also used for agrarian reforms which led to the country being food self-sufficient. Therefore, for endogenous development to materialise, Africans should learn to prioritise social, political, cultural, and epistemological independence; they must know that the people (themselves) are features of development; they must revert to concepts such as “letsema” and; they must insist that they create a strong, lean, clean and efficient government (strong state).

Merging theory with practice: I found that what sets Sankara apart from many other revolutionaries and neo-colonial (mis)leaders was his unique and seemingly innate ability to link theory and practice in a contextually relevant and nuanced manner. This, combined with his charismatic character that was underpinned by his action-orientated approach to governance, are some of the leadership traits that set Sankara apart from many renowned leaders in Africa, and I must hasten to add, globally as well. In line with Mr Faye and reiteration by several others, I found that Sankara was not dogmatically held hostage by ideological rhetoric; he was rather concerned about the lived conditions for the people of Burkina Faso, what needed to be changed, and what he could learn from theory to change the lived realities of the Burkinabe. Sankara’s deeds, such as his writings; the close cooperation between Burkina Faso and Ghana being a potential blueprint for African and diaspora integration; systematic delinking from France (and other former colonies and hegemonies), and authenticity in policy-

making are some of the “radical” lessons that current leaders can draw from Sankara’s Burkina Faso for African renewal to be better advanced.

All sectors of the state must be revolutionised: Sankara’s (2016: 324) remark that, “in four years of revolution, we’ve carried out many important revolutionary transformations. We’ve laid the basis for solving numerous problems facing our people. We’ve been very active across different sectors of our society”, led to the conclusion that for real change to happen, an overhaul of all neo-colonial legacies and practices together with coloniality, must be expedited and prioritised. In attempting to revolutionise all sectors of the state, the study found that this was achieved in Burkina Faso because: Sankara's government gave new meaning to democracy and elections; Democracy should be subject to people's culture and their way of life; The justice system was reformed such that it was culturally sensitive; Institutional reforms such as the introduction of CDRs, National Council of the Revolution, etc, are important as they act as the foundation for execution of developmental policies.

Debt and foreign aid are the handmaiden of colonisers: One of the most notable findings which cannot be overemphasised is the role of foreign debt, aid in all its forms, and loans and their ability to undermine the sovereignty of African countries. That is why Thomas Sankara understood that what is to be done for Africans must be done by Africans themselves with their own resources. An important finding under this theme is that Sankara tried on numerous occasions to unite Africans by lobbying African heads of state using the OAU platform, pleading with them to unite using a Pan African strategy of ‘unity is strength’, to refuse to pay an unjustified and unjustifiable colonial debt. Sankara found that in order to avoid the debt and aid crisis that was crippling (and continues to cripple) Africa, these interventions had to be collectively and urgently made: Countries have to operate and spend within their means by being fiscally disciplined and through self-imposed austerity; Debt free Africa will mean a giant step towards genuine liberation of the continent because, as Sankara (2016: 303) aptly put it, “debt is a cleverly organised reconquest of Africa” and; Africans are cautioned that they should only accept foreign aid that helps us to overcome the need for more aid.

Key Findings Addressing Research Objectives:

- To explore governance philosophies of Thomas Sankara and his Pan African ideals:

Theme six, which is about Sankara being ahead of his time, sought to fulfil this objective. What emerged from this theme was that considering his age, background, and the way he assumed

power in August 1983, Sankara achieved a lot more for Burkina Faso in just four years than what other African countries have achieved in more than fifty years of independence. I also found that Sankara was, amongst others, a philosopher and religious being, anti-personality cults and tremendously advocated for women emancipation. He had self-determination and agency, and was a devoted advocate for “people-to-people Pan Africanism”. Sankara did not want to be idolised, and there are numerous instances that show this, including from the testimonies of interviewees in this study who continuously mentioned that he was a man of the people. This was also evident in his modest lifestyle. Therefore, simplicity, modesty, work ethic and consequence-based governance were some of his governance philosophies.

When it comes to issues of women upliftment, the study found that almost all respondents and the literature unanimously converge on how serious Sankara was about women. Prof McFadden (2018: 175), opined that, “there is no other black radical man – intellectual or political leader, or both – who has articulated and insisted upon the advanced gender-inclusive ideas and policies that Sankara advocated for and *implemented*”. Graph 6F also adds to McFadden’s remarks here because it shows that Sankara spoke of women related challenges and proposed solutions in almost 80% (79.5%) of his sampled speeches. Therefore, women emancipation was one of the cardinal pillars of Sankara’s political philosophy.

- To put into perspective Burkina Faso’s popular revolution of 1983:

Theme one, “Democratic and Popular Revolution”, attempts to answer this objective. This objective was achieved through these four sub-themes which emerged from the analyses: Coup d’état or revolution debate; Sankara used soft power and/or coercion to persuade; Mixed governance approach: bottom-up and top-down; The military and civilians together instigated and sustained the revolution. I found that the raging debate on whether there was a genuine revolution in Burkina Faso in 1983 or it was just a façade coup depended largely on who makes the determination and what kind of evidence they present in arriving at their conclusions. This study found that the 4 August seizure of power was indeed a revolution, not a coup as some argue. Dembele (2013) concurs that “the Sankarist Revolution was one of the greatest attempts at popular and democratic emancipation in post-Independence Africa. That is why it is considered a novel experience of deep economic, social, cultural and political transformation as evidenced by mass mobilisations to get people to take responsibility for their own needs.” One of the intriguing findings, albeit with a small proportion, and being opposed by the

majority of the results (over 90%), is the widespread belief by most of the undergraduate students from one of the FDGs who strongly argued that Sankara was a dictator who suppressed people and that the August 1983 moment was merely a “coup baptised as a revolution”

- To describe Sankara’s leadership qualities and organisational capabilities:

This objective is answered by Theme nine which is that “all sectors of the state must be revolutionised”. Findings from this theme have already been reported above under findings that answer the primary research question.

- To distil lessons for socio-economic development from the Sankara administration:

Attempts to answer this research objective are made through three different themes from across the findings. These themes are: Endogenous development strategy; Recourse to force as one of his strategies; Basis of Sankara’s thinking – produce what you consume. The fact that three themes speak directly to this objective makes sense because the objective is also directly linked to the topic of the study itself which seeks to draw developmental lessons for a renewed Africa, from Sankara’s government in Burkina Faso. One of the main findings with respect to self-propelled, self-centred, or endogenous development efforts was that agrarian reforms were designed such that they formed the bedrock of economic self-reliance and industrial development in Burkina Faso. The transformed national economy, according to Sankara (2016: 81), had to be “independent, self-sufficient, and planned at the service of a democratic and popular society”. In addition, amongst others, the national economy sought to engender these major reforms: Agrarian reform; Administrative reform; Educational reform, and Reform of the structures of production and distribution in the modern sector. At a personal level which was illuminated by his modest lifestyle, Sankara at all times led by example because his thinking was that he could not request any sacrifices from the people which he himself could not be a part of and give leadership. It also emerged quite strongly that endogenous development required a clean, lean, and efficient government. Sankara was building this strong developmental state, which he argued, could only be a reality if corruption was uprooted, and capable and skilled people were employed to serve society.

Two of the most important adverse findings against Sankara and his revolutionary government were on two key issues: 1) Curtailing of traditional leaders’ powers by excluding them in the land reforms processes, and 2) Sankara’s hostility towards political parties and trade unions.

Sankara's heavy handedness when it came to dissenting views, be it from political parties or from trade unions, greatly compromised his legitimacy as President, coupled with the way he handled land reforms with traditional leaders who were deprived of land powers they had before. All these internal contradictions only served to bolster external enemies of the revolution. Finally, Sankara's insistence that their revolution was fundamentally about ensuring the wellbeing of peasants more than any other class may have been a double-edged sword as it meaningfully empowered proletariats, but also alienated city dwellers and the middle class who felt threatened by his rhetoric.

Lastly, the Integrated overall findings of the study indicate that the revolutionary cause and intervention in all critical sectors such as education, health, and the economy were prioritised and the pace at which these sectors were overhauled was crucial. The concept of "revolution" was frequently used in Sankara's speeches and in the sampled speeches it appeared just under 300 times, giving it a per centage frequency of close to 60% (59.9%). Secondly, integrated results that expanded my understanding of Sankara's governance philosophy was that it was fundamentally underpinned by the notion of participatory governance. Without the buy-in of the general population, most of the development programmes that were achieved (i.e., battle of the railways) would not have been achieved. The democratic and popular revolution also placed much emphasis on implementation of policies at rapid pace, that is why food security was achieved that quickly because they understood that hunger cannot be postponed.

C: Implications of Findings

I found that there are broadly four implications from findings of the study; socio-economic development of other countries; Pan-African unity; African Renaissance; and Governance and leadership. These are explained and discussed in detail below.

(1) Socio-economic development for other countries

The implications from Burkina Faso's experience, for social and economic development are, firstly, that development cannot be externally imported either through foreign direct investments or through a straight-jacket policy transfer where African countries often borrow European economic policies and try to implement them in drastically different settings. Therefore, at the nerve centre of development efforts in Burkina Faso was a self-propelled,

self-centred, and endogenous development model which placed the agency and responsibility, first and foremost, in the hands of Burkinabe people themselves using their own internal resources to improve their lives. Therefore, other countries, specifically in Africa, can still learn that socio-economic development is possible in less than one term of office in government, provided society is mobilised and involved in policy decisions and in development projects. Another implication is that lack of foreign aid or loans should not and cannot halt the development process if those charged with leading society at all levels and spheres of government do so with utmost selflessness and self-sacrifice, discipline, incorruptibility, commitment and patriotism for their country. Economic self-reliance and food sovereignty are, therefore, also extremely important for social and economic development to be realised in other African countries. Contemporary African states are better positioned, with the benefit of hindsight and lessons from the Burkina experience and experiment, to propel a faster paced development agenda.

(2) Pan-African unity

The overarching implication for Pan-African unity and Pan-Africanism as a whole is that if Africa does not meaningfully unite, not just economically, but more so politically, culturally and psycho-socially, it will remain scrambling for “food”, dignity, and respect in the international geopolitical arena. Kwame Nkrumah long cautioned African leaders that they had only two options, to “unite or perish”, and Sankara also made the same plea during his speech in 1987 at the OAU, where he argued for a united Africa in refusing to repay the colonial debt. Because he was isolated in making such a courageous anti-imperialist call, Sankara was killed a few months later as he had predicted that if all African countries do not join him in that call, he would not be alive to attend the next meeting of the OAU. The recent adoption of the widely hailed African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a commendable step in the right direction towards a united Africa, at least economically in terms of trade. However, if political unification of Africa in the form of a union government is not accelerated and practically worked on with the same enthusiasm as the economic unification efforts are, then what might seem like a united states of Africa dream deferred might very well be a dream denied.

(3) African Renaissance

One of the implications for the rebirth of Africa that comes out strongly from the findings is that there must be an Afrocentric mental shift that must be inculcated not only in the minds and

hearts of African leaders of today and of the future, but more importantly in the minds of the ordinary citizens of Africa in its entirety. Rejuvenation of African philosophies such as Maat, Sankofa, Ubuntu, and African spirituality are some of the important ingredients that can help foster the African Renaissance ideal. Infusion of certain progressive African traditions, customs and cultures and way so living that predates colonialism, were proven to be useful in the case of Burkina Faso. For instance, the regeneration of the ancient Burkinabe culture of planting trees during ceremonies was used alongside other interventions for environmental conservation light fighting desertification. In addition, communalism was also encouraged through social development projects and programmes where society was encouraged to work together in building of dams, filling of dongas, building of houses and other infrastructure like the “battle of the railways” project.

(4) Governance and leadership

Sankara’s governance approach and leadership style were quite unconventional, what might be deemed and described as “radical” in many respects. The overall implication, therefore, is that Sankara and his NCR government did not abide by the codified “good governance” gospel as preached by the global capitalist system and its Bretton Woods institutions (i.e., the World Bank and IMF). His governance model and leadership approach were solely based on the actual, not perceived, need of ordinary Burkinabe, especially those that were marginalised by the previous neo-colonial puppet governments. His was a popular democratic revolution, which today is known as a Sankarist governance strategy premised on the following seven key pillars identified from the thesis findings: women emancipation; disciplined and principled leadership; prioritising implementation of the most pressing needs of the marginalised; participatory governance; pragmatism; self-negation and servant leadership; and incorruptibility of civil servants. The most glaring qualitative finding was with regard to his inclusion of women in all aspects of his government and its programmes because he realised that there was lack of women leadership and participation in government and other sectors of society. The stroke of genius in his uncompromising efforts to help fight for women freedoms was the fact that he encouraged them to take charge of their own emancipation and lead projects towards that end. In short, the implication is that African leaders cannot continue denying women key leadership roles in in all sectors of society, as this would be denying more than half the population the right to self-determination and the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to towards building the Africa we want as espoused by the African Union Vision 2063.

D: Recommendations and Lessons

This section makes a few recommendations and draws lessons that African leaders can learn from, be it at a national or local level of government; Policy makers, politicians, Pan Africanists and Afrocentrists, researchers and academics on development that seek to explore “the third way” alternatives to development. Civil servants and peasants, etc, could also possibly benefit from this research findings and recommendations. The study makes six recommendations in line with the key findings:

1. A new model for development in Africa, using the Sankarian endogenous development model as the base and blueprint, is urgently required. This model should, ideally and tentatively, be premised on these aspects as some of its pillars: food sovereignty of Africa, military-civilian production (as was the case in Burkina Faso, and it is currently the case in Egypt, for instance), self-sufficiency in research and technology, targeted and deliberate production and consumption of “made in Afrika” products and services.
2. All development efforts should be based on the triple principles of Afrocentricity, Sankofa historical and cultural approach, and Pan Africanism. In all three of these concepts, historical consciousness and reference is a common thread. Another important aspect that binds these concepts is the importance of culture, customs, norms, and ethical principles of Maat Philosophy which stresses the importance of balance in the world.
3. Gender equality and equity should form a central tenet in all development programmes and policies, because without women taking up their rightful role in society, politics, and the economy, more than half of society and humanity would be excluded and such development efforts will continue to be doomed for failure.
4. Fiscal discipline and sacrifice should be prioritised at all costs. African countries are implored and urged to live within their means when crafting budgets, and to avoid by all means necessary, the edge and temptation of blindly accepting foreign aid and loans (with or without conditions) because they can only lead to the recolonisation (albeit in different form) of Africa. This is because: a) Sankara had the wisdom to understand the parasitic ruthless effects of debt on African economies, b) debt indeed continues to be a cleverly managed reconquest of Africa. Therefore, if Sankara can, as indicated in the previous chapter, in just two years, transform Burkina Faso from a budget deficit of 695 million CFA francs in 1983, to a budget surplus of

1.0985 billion CFA francs by 1985, then it can be done and must be attempted with vigour by more African countries.

5. African countries should begin to design public policies that are authentic, relevant and suitable to the lived realities of the over 1.2 billion Africans on the continent, not forgetting hundreds of millions of Africans in the diaspora, who, according to the aspirations and key tenets of Pan Africanism, are also Africans. In part, this can be achieved by merging theory with practice, which is what distinguished Sankara from many of his peers.

6. An important lesson that those in positions of power such as state presidents should consider, especially those that are not beholden to the global super powers (hegemons) that be, and are considered 'radical', is that they must be security conscious (not paranoid), while being mindful of wasteful expenditure on unnecessary long convoys and private security. Sankara was killed, in part, because he had neglected the need for strong security for him even after numerous tip-offs and intelligence that there was an imminent plot to assassinate him.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form (English Version)

Informed Consent From

Title of proposed study: Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in Contemporary Africa:
Lessons from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara

This form serves to give the Researcher, **Moorosi Leshoele**, Permission to interview me on Thomas Sankara's legacy. I am aware that I can withdraw from the interview process at any stage should I feel that I am no longer comfortable with proceeding with it. My participation in this interview is voluntary and I have been briefed that my personal details will be kept confidential throughout the course of the research process. No payment or financial incentive will be received by me (interviewee) due to my participation in this study. I, the undersigned (participant) agree to partake in this research project. This research seeks to academically study the developmental discourse and governance approach of Sankara with the intention of drawing lessons from his successes and failures during his Presidency.

First Name of participant: Surname of participant:

Participant's Signature: Place and Date:

Researcher's name(s):

Researcher's signature: Place and Date:

Contact details of Researcher: **Moorosi Leshoele** moorosileshoele@gmail.com

Contact details of Supervisor: **Prof Vusi Gumede** gumedvt@unisa.ac.za

Appendix B: Consent Form (French Version)

Consentement éclairé de

Titre de l'étude proposée: Panafricanisme et Renaissance africaine en Afrique contemporaine:

Les leçons de Thomas Sankara du Burkina Faso

Ce formulaire sert à donner au chercheur, **Moorosi Leshoele**, Permission de m'interviewer sur Thomas L'héritage de Sankara. Je suis conscient que je peux me retirer du processus d'entrevue à n'importe quelle étape si je ressens

que je ne suis plus à l'aise pour le faire. Ma participation à cette interview est volontaire et j'ai été informé que mes informations personnelles resteront confidentielles tout au long de la processus de recherche. Aucun paiement ou incitation financière ne sera reçu par moi (interviewé) en raison de mon

participation à cette étude. Je soussigné (participant) accepte de participer à ce projet de recherche. Ce la recherche à étudier le discours développemental et l'approche de la gouvernance de Sankara avec l'intention de tirer des leçons de ses succès et de ses échecs durant sa présidence.

Prénom du participant: Nom du participant:

Signature du participant: Lieu et date:

Nom (s) du chercheur:

Signature du chercheur: Lieu et date:

Coordonnées du chercheur: Moorosi Leshoele moorosileshoele@gmail.com

Coordonnées du superviseur: Prof. Vusi Gumede gumedvt@unisa.ac.za

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Certificate



**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FOR ETHICS REVIEW AND CLEARANCE**

Date: 16/11/2016

Ref
#:2016_DEVSTUD_Student_23
Name of applicant: Mr/Ms
Leshoele M
Student #: 45775389

Open Rubric

Dear Mr/Ms Leshoele M

Decision: Ethical Clearance

Name: MR/Ms Leshoele M

Student in the Department of Development Studies; Supervisor Prof. Gumede VT

Proposal: Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in Contemporary Africa: Lessons from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara

E-mail: 45775389@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Qualification: Doctoral Degree in Development Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Your application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee on 16/11/2016.

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of Development Studies' Research



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Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.

- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Note:

The reference number 2016_DEVSTUD_Student_23 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication. [E.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the Department of Development Studies' Research Ethics Review Committee.

Kind regards,


.....
Dr LJ Ntema
Departmental Chairperson-ERC
Department of Development Studies
Room TvW 4-25
Tel 012 429 2121
E-mail: ntemalj@unisa.ac.za



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Topic: Pan Africanism and African Renaissance in Contemporary Africa: Lessons from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara

By Moorosi Leshoele⁵¹

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong response/answer to any of these questions.

1. Sankara's Governance Mechanisms

- 1.1 What do you feel influenced majority of Burkinabe' people to embrace Sankara's revolutionary governance approach?
- 1.2 In your view, how was knowledge of African and world history important to Sankara's thought and philosophy? How do you feel this knowledge influenced his governance of Burkina Faso?
- 1.3 What mechanisms/strategies did Sankara use to ensure that Burkina became food self-sufficient by 1987?
- 1.4 Please describe how Sankara's revolutionary governance approach could work (or works) in electoral democratic states?

2. Sankara's Economic Development Tactics

- 2.1 How did food sustenance/sufficiency that Sankara achieved in Burkina affect the lives of ordinary people and the economy?
- 2.2 Were Sankara's socio-economic development programs democratically enforced or they were dictatorially implemented?

3. Ideology and Praxis of Sankara

- 3.1 Do you think Sankara contributed to 'African Leadership Curse' or to 'African Leadership Renaissance'? Why and how?
- 3.2 What was Sankara's vision for a post-colonial Africa? How did he envision Africa could be rebuilt?

⁵¹ Moorosi is a PhD candidate at University of South Africa (UNISA), in the Development Studies Department. He is also a research assistant at Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute based at UNISA, Pretoria.

4. Sankara's Leadership Attributes

- 4.1 Which aspects of Sankara's leadership traits can contemporary African leaders emulate? Which ones should they avoid?
- 4.2 How would you broadly describe Sankara's leadership style and Presidency?
- 4.3 What about Sankara as a person or about his government leadership is NOT widely known?

5. Sankara's Legacy, Past and Present

- 5.1 How can legacies of great African leaders like Sankara be used to inform and guide contemporary leaders for African renaissance to be achieved?
- 5.2 Did Sankara's youthful age (33 years when he became President) play any role in shaping his radical governance posture?
- 5.3 What role did Sankara play in fostering a strong Burkinabe identity and culture (i.e., eat and consume Burkinabe saying).

6. Sankara's International Relations and Pan-Africanism

- 6.1 How did Burkina Faso relate with its former coloniser (France) and the West at large? How did he want Africa to relate to its former colonisers.
- 6.2 What would you say, in your view, was Sankara's most important and defining policies? (domestic policy and foreign policy)?
- 6.3 What do you think led to the down fall and assassination of Sankara? How could he have avoided this fateful end to his administration and life

Questionnaire

Thème: **Panafricanisme et Renaissance Africain dans une Afrique Contemporain: Les leçons de Thomas Sankara du Burkina Faso**

Par Moorosi Leshoele

Veillez répondre aux questions suivantes au mieux de vos capacités. Il n'y a pas de vrai ou de faux

réponse / réponse à l'une de ces questions.

1. Les mécanismes de gouvernance de Sankara

1.1 Qu'est-ce qui, selon vous, a influencé la majorité des Burkinabés à embrasser l'approche de gouvernance révolutionnaire de Sankara?

1.2 À votre avis, comment la connaissance de l'histoire africaine et mondiale était-elle importante pour la pensée et la philosophie de Sankara? Comment pensez-vous que cette connaissance a influencé sa gouvernance du Burkina Faso?

1.3 Quels mécanismes / stratégies Sankara a-t-il utilisés pour s'assurer que le Burkina atteigne l'autosuffisance alimentaire en 1987?

1.4 Veuillez décrire comment l'approche de la gouvernance révolutionnaire de Sankara pourrait fonctionner (ou fonctionnerai) dans les états démocratiques électoraux?

2. Les tactiques de développement économique de Sankara

2.1 Comment la subsistance / suffisance alimentaire que Sankara a obtenue au Burkina affecte-t-elle la vie des gens ordinaires et l'économie?

2.2 Les programmes de développement socioéconomique de Sankara étaient-ils démocratiquement appliqués ou ont été dictatorialement mis en œuvre?

3. Idéologie et action de Sankara

3.1 Pensez-vous que Sankara a contribué à la «malédiction du leadership africain» ou à «la Renaissance du Leadership Africain? Pourquoi et comment?

3.2 Quelle était la vision de Sankara pour une Afrique postcoloniale? Comment envisage-t-il l'Afrique être reconstruit?

4. Attributs de leadership Sankara

4.1 Quels aspects des traits de leadership de Sankara peuvent imiter les dirigeants africains contemporains?

Lequel devrait-il éviter?

4.2 Comment décririez-vous le style de leadership global et la présidence de Sankara?

4.3 Quel aspect de Sankara en tant que personne ou de son leadership gouvernemental?

Est le moins connu?

5. L'héritage de Sankara, passé et présent

5.1 Comment pouvez-vous utiliser les traces de grands leaders africains comme Sankara pour informer et guider

Les dirigeants contemporains de la renaissance africaine à réaliser?

5.2 Le jeune âge de Sankara (34 ans devenu président) a-t-il joué un rôle dans la formation de sa posture de gouvernance radicale?

5.3 Quel rôle Sankara a-t-il joué dans la promotion d'une identité et d'une culture fortes au Burkina Faso (exemple manger et consomme burkinabé).

6. Les relations internationales et le panafricanisme de Sankara

6.1 Comment le Burkina Faso a-t-il communiqué avec son ancien colonisateur (France) et l'Occident en général?

Quel genre de relation Sankara voulait que l'Afrique aille avec ses anciens colonisateurs?

6.2 Selon vous, quelles sont les politiques les plus importantes et les plus décisives de Sankara?

(Politique intérieure et étrangère ?)

6.3 Selon vous qu'est-ce qui a provoqué les soucis et l'assassinat de Sankara? Comment aurait-il pu

éviter cette fin fatidique à son administration et à sa vie

Je vous remercie

Questionnaire

Thème: **Panafricanisme et Renaissance Africain dans une Afrique Contemporain:Les leçons de Thomas Sankara du Burkina Faso**

Par Moorosi Leshoele

Veillez répondre aux questions suivantes au mieux de vos capacités. Il n'y a pas de vraie ou de fausse

~~réponse~~ / réponse à l'une de ces questions.

1. Les mécanismes de gouvernance de Sankara

1.1 Qu'est-ce qui, selon vous, a influencé la majorité des Burkinabés à embrasser l'approche de gouvernance révolutionnaire de Sankara?

1.2 À votre avis, comment la connaissance de l'histoire africaine et mondiale était-elle importante pour la pensée et la philosophie de Sankara? Comment pensez-vous que cette connaissance a influencé sa gouvernance du Burkina Faso?

1.3 Quels mécanismes / stratégies Sankara a-t-il utilisés pour s'assurer que le Burkina atteigne l'autosuffisance alimentaire en 1987?

1.4 Veuillez décrire comment l'approche de la gouvernance révolutionnaire de Sankara pourrait fonctionner (ou fonctionnerai) dans les états démocratiques électoraux?

2. Les tactiques de développement économique de Sankara

2.1 Comment la subsistance / suffisance alimentaire que Sankara a obtenue au Burkina affecte-t-elle la vie ~~des gens ordinaires~~ du peuple ordinaire et l'économie?

2.2 Les programmes de développement socioéconomiques de Sankara étaient-ils démocratiquement appliqués ~~ou ont été~~ dictatorialement mis en œuvre?

3. Idéologie et action de Sankara

3.1 Pensez-vous que Sankara a contribué à la «malédiction du leadership africain» ou à «la Renaissance du Leadership Africain? Pour quoi et comment?

3.2 Quelle était la vision de Sankara pour une Afrique postcoloniale? Comment ~~envisage~~ a-t-il envisagé la reconstruction de l'Afrique ?
être reconstruit?

4. Attributs de leadership Sankara

4.1 Quels aspects des traits de leadership de Sankara peuvent imiter les dirigeants africains contemporains?

Lesquels devraient-ils éviter?

4.2 Comment décririez-vous globalement le style de leadership ~~global~~ et la ~~présidence~~ gouvernance de Sankara?

4.3 Quels sont les aspects de Sankara en tant que personne ou de son leadership gouvernemental?
~~Est~~ les moins connus?

5. ~~L'héritage~~ Le patrimoine de Sankara, passé et présent

5.1 Comment ~~pouvez-vous~~ peut-on utiliser les patrimoines laissés par les ~~traces de~~ grands leaders africains comme Sankara pour informer et guider les

Les dirigeants contemporains ~~de la renaissance~~ africaine à pour réaliser aboutir à la renaissance?

5.2 Le jeune âge de Sankara (34 ans devenu président) a-t-il joué un rôle dans la formation de sa posture de gouvernance radicale?

5.3 Quel rôle Sankara a-t-il joué dans la promotion d'une identité et d'une culture fortes au Burkina Faso (exemple manger et consommer burkinabé).

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6.1 Comment le Burkina Faso a-t-il communiqué avec son ancien colonisateur (France) et l'Occident en général?

Quel genre de relation Sankara voulait que l'Afrique ~~ai~~ait avec ses anciens colonisateurs?

6.2 Selon vous, quelles sont les politiques les plus importantes et les plus décisives de Sankara?
(Politique intérieure et étrangère ?)

6.3 Selon vous qu' est ce qui a provoqué ~~é~~er les soucis et l'assassinat de Sankara? Comment aurait-il pu

Éviter é cette fin fatidique à son administration et à sa vie ?

Je vous remercie

Questionnaire

Thème: Panafricanisme et Renaissance Africain dans une Afrique Contemporain:

Les leçons de Thomas Sankara du Burkina Faso

Par Moorosi Leshoele

Veuillez répondre aux questions suivantes au mieux de vos capacités. Il n'y a pas de vraie ou de fausse ~~réponse~~ / réponse à l'une de ces questions.

1. Les mécanismes de gouvernance de Sankara

1.1 Qu'est-ce qui, selon vous, a influencé la majorité des Burkinabés à embrasser l'approche de gouvernance révolutionnaire de Sankara?

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3. Idéologie et action de Sankara

3.1 Pensez-vous que Sankara a contribué à la «malédiction du leadership africain» ou à «la Renaissance du Leadership Africain? Pour quoi et comment?

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6. Les relations internationales et le panafricanisme de Sankara

6.1 Comment le Burkina Faso a-t-il communiqué avec son ancien colonisateur (France) et l'Occident en général?

Quel genre de relation Sankara voulait que l'Afrique ait avec ses anciens colonisateurs?

6.2 Selon vous, quelles sont les politiques les plus importantes et les plus décisives de Sankara?

(Politique intérieure et étrangère ?)

6.3 Selon vous qu' est ce qui a provoqué les soucis et l'assassinat de Sankara? Comment aurait-il pu

Éviter cette fin fatidique à son administration et à sa vie?

Je vous remercie

Appendix H: Individual Speeches and Literature Coding

Individual Speeches & Literature Coding							

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)				Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Industrialisation/ED	7	1	29,2%	Aid/Debt/FDI	23	1	51,1%
Economic self-reliance	4	2	16,7%	Self-lessness/Sacrifice	12	2	26,7%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	4	2	16,7%	Austerity	4	3	8,9%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	4	2	16,7%	Economic self-reliance	3	4	6,7%
Food self-sufficiency	3	3	12,5%	Industrialisation/ED	2	5	4,4%
Aid/Debt/FDI	2	4	8,3%	Food self-sufficiency	1	6	2,2%
Austerity	0	5	0,0%	Produce-consume Burkinabe	0	7	0,0%
Sub-total	24		100,0%	Sub-total	45		100,0%
Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)				Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Women emancipation	27	1	37,0%	Discipline/Principle/d	10	1	58,8%
Implementation	15	2	20,5%	Self-negation/Servant leadership	3	2	17,6%
Discipline/Principle/d	13	3	17,8%	Pragmatism	2	3	11,8%
Participatory governance	11	4	15,1%	Participatory governance	1	4	5,9%
Pragmatism	5	5	6,8%	Implementation	1	4	5,9%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	2	6	2,7%	Women emancipation	0	5	0,0%
Incorruptable/ility	0	7	0,0%	Incorruptable/ility	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	73		100,0%	Sub-total	17		100,0%

Quantification Coding: "Freedom Must be Conquered"				Quantification Coding: "The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women"			
Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)				Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Culture	8	1	47,1%	Imperialism/anti-imperialism	8	1	30,8%
National/ism	4	2	23,5%	Colonialism/anti-/neo-colonial	8	1	30,8%
Imperialism/anti-imperialism	3	3	17,6%	Culture	6	2	23,1%
Colonialism/anti-/neo-colonial	2	4	11,8%	National/ism	3	3	11,5%
Africa/n unity	0	5	0,0%	Africa/n unity	1	4	3,8%
Pan African/ism	0	5	0,0%	Pan African/ism	0	5	0,0%
Renaissance	0	5	0,0%	Renaissance	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	17		100,0%	Sub-total	26		100,0%
Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)				Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution/ary	17	1	47,2%	Revolution/ary	53	1	59,6%
Freedom/independence	12	2	33,3%	Freedom/independence	22	2	24,7%
Coup de'tat/military	4	3	11,1%	Democratic and popular revolution	6	3	6,7%
Proletariats/peasants	2	4	5,6%	Decolonise/ation	4	4	4,5%
Democratic and popular revolution	1	5	2,8%	Proletariats/peasants	4	4	4,5%
Decolonise/ation	0	6	0,0%	Coup de'tat/military	0	5	0,0%
Authoritarian/ism	0	6	0,0%	Authoritarian/ism	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	36		100,0%	Sub-total	89		100,0%

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)				Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Aid/Debt/FDI	11	1	73,3%	Food self-sufficiency	11	1	73,3%
Austerity	2	2	13,3%	Economic self-reliance	3	2	20,0%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	1	3	6,7%	Produce-consume Burkinabe	1	3	6,7%
Food self-sufficiency	1	3	6,7%	Aid/Debt/FDI	0	4	0,0%
Industrialisation/ED	0	4	0,0%	Austerity	0	4	0,0%
Economic self-reliance	0	4	0,0%	Self-lessness/Sacrifice	0	4	0,0%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	0	4	0,0%	Industrialisation/ED	0	4	0,0%
Sub-total	15		100,0%	Sub-total	15		100,0%
Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)				Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Women emancipation	8	1	61,5%	Women emancipation	371	1	90,9%
Discipline/Principle/d	2	2	15,4%	Implementation	15	2	3,7%
Implementation	1	3	7,7%	Discipline/Principle/d	10	3	2,5%
Participatory governance	1	3	7,7%	Participatory governance	9	4	2,2%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	1	3	7,7%	Pragmatism	3	5	0,7%
Pragmatism	0	4	0,0%	Self-negation/Servant leadership	0	6	0,0%
Incorruptable/ility	0	4	0,0%	Incorruptable/ility	0	6	0,0%
Sub-total	13		100,0%	Sub-total	408		100,0%

			<u>Book Chapters and Journal Articles on Sankara</u>			
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[illegible]

Quantification Coding: "Military Coup, Popular Revolutions or Militarised Revolution?" De-Valera & Traore, 2018	
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Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)		
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Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Imperialism/anti-imperialism	19	1	30,6%
National/ism	14	2	22,6%
Culture	12	3	19,4%
Colonialism/anti-colonialism	8	4	12,9%
Pan African/ism	6	5	9,7%
Africa/n unity	3	6	4,8%
Renaissance	0	7	0,0%
Sub-total	62		100,0%

Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)			
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Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution/ary	87	1	53,7%
Coup de'tat/military	44	2	27,2%
Democratic and popular revolu	19	3	11,7%
Freedom/independence	11	4	6,8%
Proletariats/peasants	1	5	0,6%
Decolonise/ation	0	6	0,0%
Authoritarian/ism	0	6	0,0%
Sub-total	162		100,0%

Quantification Coding: "Africa's Sankara: On Pan African Leadership"			
Amber Murrey, 2018			

Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)		
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Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Imperialism/anti-imperialism	13	1	31,7%
Colonialism/anti-colonialism	9	2	22,0%
Culture	7	3	17,1%
Pan African/ism	6	4	14,6%
National/ism	4	5	9,8%
Africa/n unity	1	6	2,4%
Renaissance	1	6	2,4%
Sub-total	41		100,0%

Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)			
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Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution/ary	91	1	59,5%
Coup de'tat/military	36	2	23,5%
Freedom/independence	15	3	9,8%
Authoritarian/ism	6	4	3,9%
Decolonise/ation	4	5	2,6%
Democratic and popular revolu	1	6	0,7%
Proletariats/peasants	0	7	0,0%
Sub-total	153		100,0%

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)				Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Economic self-reliance	4	1	50,0%	Self-lessness/Sacrifice	4	1	36,4%
Industrialisation/ED	2	2	25,0%	Austerity	3	2	27,3%
Food self-sufficiency	1	3	12,5%	Food self-sufficiency	2	3	18,2%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	1	3	12,5%	Economic self-reliance	1	4	9,1%
Austerity	0	4	0,0%	Produce-consume Burkinabe	1	4	9,1%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	0	4	0,0%	Aid/Debt/FDI	0	5	0,0%
Aid/Debt/FDI	0	4	0,0%	Industrialisation/ED	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	8		100,0%	Sub-total	11		100,0%
Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)				Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Implementation	14	1	53,8%	Discipline/Principle/d	6	1	21,4%
Pragmatism	6	2	23,1%	Implementation	5	2	17,9%
Participatory governance	3	3	11,5%	Pragmatism	5	2	17,9%
Discipline/Principle/d	3	3	11,5%	Self-negation/Servant leadership	4	3	14,3%
Women emancipation	0	4	0,0%	Women emancipation	3	4	10,7%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	0	4	0,0%	Incorruptable/ility	3	4	10,7%
Incorruptable/ility	0	4	0,0%	Participatory governance	2	5	7,1%
Sub-total	26		100,0%	Sub-total	28		100,0%

Journal Articles							
Quantification Coding: Ideology and Praxis in Sankara's populist revolution. Guy Martin 1987				Quantification Coding: The legacies of Sankara: a revolutionary experience in retrospect. Ernest Harsch 2013			
Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)				Category 1: Pan Africanism (P-A)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
National/ism	15	1	39,5%	Culture	18	1	38,3%
Imperialism/anti-imperialism	10	2	26,3%	National/ism	10	2	21,3%
Colonialism/anti-colonialism	8	3	21,1%	Imperialism/anti-imperialism	8	3	17,0%
Culture	4	4	10,5%	Colonialism/anti-colonialism	8	3	17,0%
Pan African/ism	1	5	2,6%	Pan African/ism	3	4	6,4%
Africa/n unity	0	6	0,0%	Africa/n unity	0	5	0,0%
Renaissance	0	6	0,0%	Renaissance	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	38		100,0%	Sub-total	47		100,0%
Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)				Category 2: Revolution (Rev.)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency	Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Revolution/ary	115	1	70,1%	Revolution/ary	103	1	74,1%
Coup de'tat/military	19	2	11,6%	Coup de'tat/military	23	2	16,5%
Freedom/independence	17	3	10,4%	Freedom/independence	6	3	4,3%
Proletariats/peasants	10	4	6,1%	Proletariats/peasants	3	4	2,2%
Democratic and popular revolu	3	5	1,8%	Authoritarian/ism	3	4	2,2%
Decolonise/ation	0	6	0,0%	Democratic and popular revolu	1	5	0,7%
Authoritarian/ism	0	6	0,0%	Decolonise/ation	0	6	0,0%
Sub-total	164		100,0%	Sub-total	139		100,0%

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Economic self-reliance	6	1	25,0%
Austerity	5	2	20,8%
Food self-sufficiency	5	2	20,8%
Aid/Debt/FDI	3	3	12,5%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	3	3	12,5%
Industrialisation/ED	2	4	8,3%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	24		100,0%

Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)

Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Participatory governance	5	1	38,5%
Implementation	4	2	30,8%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	3	3	23,1%
Discipline/Principle/d	1	4	7,7%
Incorruptable/ility	0	5	0,0%
Pragmatism	0	5	0,0%
Women emancipation	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	13		100,0%

Category 3: Endogenous Development (E-D)			
Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Aid/Debt/FDI	4	1	40,0%
Economic self-reliance	1	2	10,0%
Austerity	1	2	10,0%
Produce-consume Burkinabe	1	2	10,0%
Food self-sufficiency	1	2	10,0%
Industrialisation/ED	1	2	10,0%
Self-lessness/Sacrifice	1	2	10,0%
Sub-total	10		100,0%

Category 4: Sankarism (SKM) (as a philosophy, ideology, governance approach)

Keywords/Sub-themes	Frequency	Ranking	% Frequency
Women emancipation	15	1	55,6%
Participatory governance	7	2	25,9%
Implementation	2	3	7,4%
Discipline/Principle/d	2	3	7,4%
Pragmatism	1	4	3,7%
Self-negation/Servant leadership	0	5	0,0%
Incorruptable/ility	0	5	0,0%
Sub-total	27		100,0%

Appendix I: Sankara's Leadership Traits

Sankara's Leadership Attributes/Descriptions		
Determination	Conviction	Courageous
Devotion	Pragmatic	Principled
Integrity	Charismatic	Eloquent
Innovative	Dynamic	Authentic
Voracious reader	No inferiority complex	Staunch anti-imperialist
Self-negation	Visionary	Humane
Sincere	Open-minded	Persuasive
Solutions orientated	Self-taught	Intelligent
Exemplary	Servant leader	Meticulous about time
Empathetic	Easily approachable	Not beyond reproach
Despised laziness	Workaholic	Sacrificial leader
Consultative	Evidence-based leadership	Adventurous
Anti-idolisation	Anti-personality cults	Morally astute
Ethically uncompromising	Naïve	Emotional
Virtuous	Altruistic	Consequences driven
Diligent	Pacifist	Modest
Simplicity	Impulsive	Great Orator

ANNEXURES

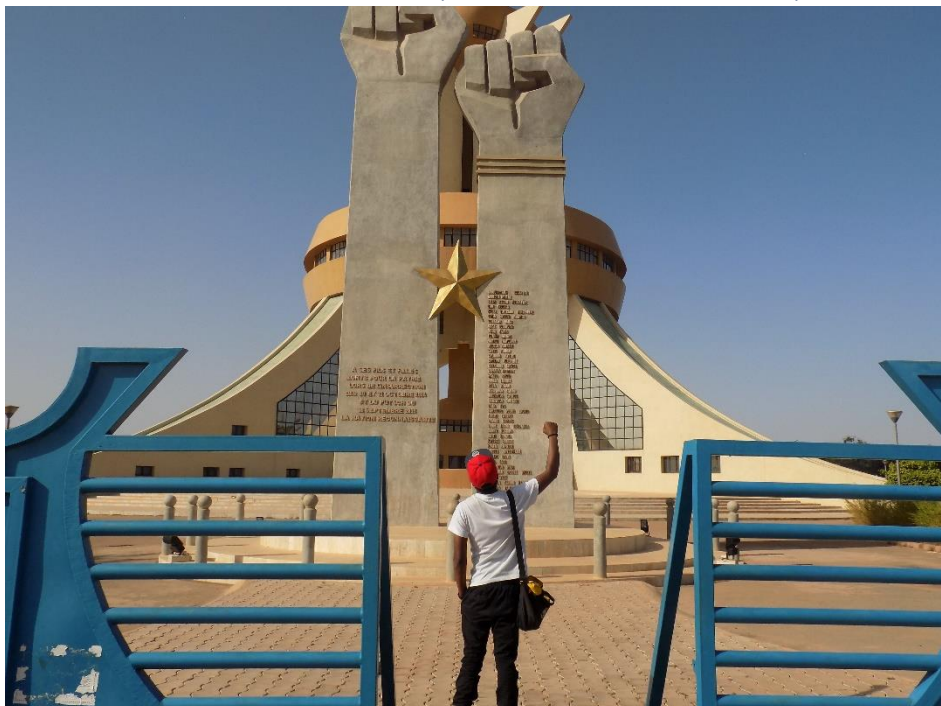
Annexure A: SIAO [International Arts and Handicrafts Trade Show of Ouagadougou]



Annexure B: Maison du Peuple [House of the People]



Annexure C: Monument des Martyrs [Monument of the Martyrs]



Annexure D: Protest march in Ouagadougou, 15 October 2017



Annexure E: FGD 1 (junior students), Ouaga University, 20 October 2017



Annexure F: FGD 2 (postgraduate students), Ouaga University, 23 October 2017



Annexure G: Dagnoem Cemetery where Sankara is/was said to be buried



Image of the author at the grave of where Sankara was said to be buried



Entrance of the cemetery

Annexure H: Burkina Faso's Flag



Annexure I: Map of Burkina Faso



Annexure J: Sankara's Statue at 'The Council of Agreement' in Ouagadougou



Next to the statue is Burkina President, Roch Marc Christian Kabore and Former President of Ghana and close friend of Sankara, JJ Rawlings. [This is where Sankara was killed].

Annexure K: Burkina Faso's Parliament that was Burned while Deposing Compaore



Annexure L: Invitation Letter from Burkina for my Data Collection (for VISA Application)

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BURKINA FASO (AREB)

BURKINA FASO
UNITE-PROGRES-JUSTICE

03 BP 7047 Ouagadougou 03

Tél : (226) 25-35-55-94/70260693 - Fax : (226) 25-35-55-96

E-mail : areb.burkina@yahoo.fr



Ouagadougou, le 3 octobre 2017

Maxime COMPAORE
Coordonnateur de l'AREB
Maître de recherche en Histoire
Institut des Sciences des Sociétés
(IN.SS)/CNRST

À
Mr Moorosi Leshoele

N°2017-16-02

Objet : Invitation à l'AREB-Ouagadougou-Burkina Faso

Réf/N : AREB-INSS/CNRST-15/2017

Dossier suivi par : Maxime COMPAORE

Tél : +226 70260693

Mail : compaore@yahoo.fr

Site web : <https://www.areb-bf.net/>

Monsieur Moorosi Leshoele,

Dans le cadre de nos échanges scientifiques sur les Grandes figures africaines, j'ai le plaisir de vous inviter à l'Institut des Sciences des Sociétés (IN.SS) / Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique et technologique (CNRST) pour vos travaux de recherches. Au cours de votre séjour, vous pourrez également participer aux activités de **commémoration** de la date d'anniversaire de l'assassinat de Thomas SANKARA du 15 octobre 2017.

Votre séjour est prévu du 13 au 24 octobre 2017.

Les frais de transports et d'hébergement sont à votre charge.

Cordialement.

Maxime COMPAORE

Annexure M: Invitation Letter from the Sankarist Party (UNIR) to Attend the 30th Anniversary of the Assassination of Thomas Sankara

Union pour la Renaissance/Parti Sankariste

Bureau Politique National

Secrétariat Exécutif National

Présidence du Parti



Arrêté de reconnaissance : N°2017-000004/MATS/SG/DGLPAP/DAPOE du 17 MARS 2017

Ouagadougou, le

14 OCT 2017

Le Président

A

Monsieur Moorosi LESHOELE

- Ouagadougou -

N/REF : 044/2017/UNIR/PS/PRES

Objet : Invitation

Monsieur,

A l'occasion de la commémoration du 30^{ème} anniversaire de l'assassinat crapuleux du Président Thomas SANKARA, l'Union pour la Renaissance/Parti Sankariste (UNIR/PS) a l'honneur de vous convier au panel qu'il organise **le Dimanche 15 octobre 2017 à 14 heures30 à la Maison du peuple à Ouagadougou, centre ville, sur le thème : L'influence des révolutions et du Sankarisme sur les mouvements sociaux au Burkina Faso.**

Heure limite d'arrivée : 14h00

Sachant compter sur votre disponibilité accoutumée, je vous prie d'agréer, **Monsieur le Président**, l'expression de ma profonde considération.

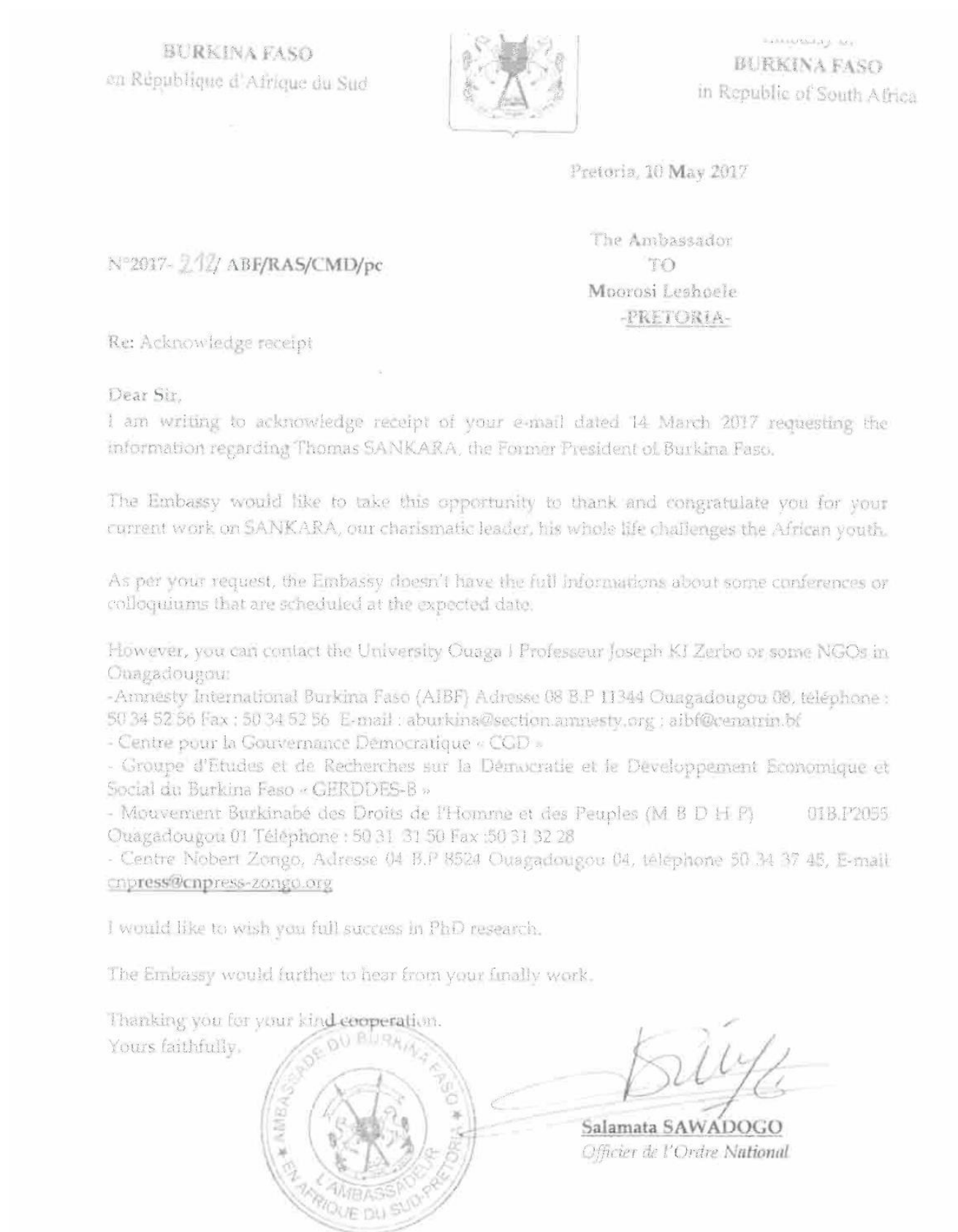
**P. Le Président P.O.
Le Secrétaire général**

Dr Adama DERA



**09 BP 715 OUAGADOUGOU 09. Tél : +226 25 36 96 10
Mail : unirps@yahoo.fr Site : www.unirps-bf.org
BURKINA FASO**

Annexure N: Correspondence Letter from Burkina Embassy in Pretoria





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**Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance in Contemporary
Africa: Lessons from Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara**

By: **Moorosi Leshoele**
(45775389)

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**

At the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: **Prof Vusi Gumede**

(September 2019)

Leshoele M - Final Thesis PhD 2020c

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